

ISLĀM,
*Sign &
Creation*

*The Cosmology of
Walāyah*

IDRIS SAMAWI HAMID

هَذَا لِلَّهِ الْمَلِكِ الْحَقِّ

هُوَ خَيْرُ ثَوَابٍ وَ خَيْرُ عُقَبَا

To my mother Zohra Akhtar,

☾ a morning star

who has now taken her orbit

in the sphere of

☾ Cosmic Walayah

Surely Allah, magnified and exalted, established Islām as the way to the water [of life]; He made its accesses easy for those who arrive at it, and fortified its foundations for the one who wars against it. He made it an honor for the one who receives its *waldyah*; a safety for the one who enters it; a guidance for the one who follows it; an adornment for the one who accepts its covering; an apologia for the one who adopts it; a handle for the one who seeks protection through it, and a rope for the one who seeks to hold on to it; a proof for the one who speaks through it, a light for the one who seeks illumination from it, and an aid to the one who seeks succor through it; a witness for the one who debates through it; and a victory for the one who argues through it; a knowledge for the one who learns from it, a tradition for the one who narrates, and a criterion for the one who judges; a forbearance to the one who practices, and a modesty to the one who contemplates; an understanding to the one who reflects, a certainty to the one who exercises consciousness, and an insight to the one who is resolute; a sign to the one who prognosticates, and a warning to the one who takes heed; a salvation for the one who affirms; a gentle deliberateness to the one who sets aright; a high rank to the one who draws near; something reliable for the one who places trust; an ease for one who delegates [his affairs to Allah]; an aspiration for the one who acts beautifully, and a goodness for the one who races forward; a shield for the one who is patient, and a raiment for the one who is dynamically aware; a support for the one who is guided; a shelter for the one who is dynamically secure, and a security for the one who surrenders; a hope for the honest, and a richness for the content. That [way] is the truth: Its path is guidance; its bequeathed trait is glory, and its characteristic is beautiful goodness. So it is the most evident of highways: illuminer of the light, kinder of the lamp; raiser of the end, facilitating in its training ground, gatherer of contestants; fast in [achieving its] aspiration, painful in punishment; complete in provisions, generous in horsemen. Dynamic belief is its highway; righteous deeds constitute its light, deep understanding constitutes its lamps, this life is its training ground, death is its end, the Resurrection is its gathering, the Garden is its aspiration, the Fire is its punishment, dynamic awareness is its provisions, and the ones who act beautifully are its horsemen. So through dynamic belief one is guided to righteous acts; through righteous acts understanding is made to thrive; through understanding death is taken seriously; through death this life is sealed; through this life the Resurrection is grounded; through the Resurrection the Garden is brought nigh. The Garden is the regret of the people of the Fire; the Fire is an admonition to the dynamically aware; and dynamic awareness is the root of dynamic belief.

‘Ali ibn Abi Ṭalib (passed 661 CE)

Summary of Contents

List of Tables	9
Exordium	11
KNOWLEDGE OF ISLĀM, ISLĀMIC KNOWLEDGE	19
1 Towards Defining Islām	21
2 Islāmīc Knowledge	33
THE FIRM SIGN	67
3 Sign & Cognizance	69
4 Allāh & His Attributes	97
5 Cognizance of the Origin	141
6 Cognizance of Destiny	195
7 Towards Higher Cognizance	209
Appendix A: Synopsis of Principles	215

List of Tables

5.1.41	The descent of <i>walāyah</i> and <i>rubūbiyyah</i> .	164
5.1.42	Square- and four-based correspondences in the cosmology of Islām.	166
5.23	The four chief angels and the Empyrean.	168

Exordium

THERE ARE MANY phenomena which are inspired by Islām or which claim its name. Given such a phenomenon, it may be in harmony with Islām in part, in totality, or not at all. It may be directly or indirectly connected with Islām; or it may share nothing with Islām except the name. In any case, these phenomena together constitute major forces in the unfolding of the World. This much is plain and clear.

Yet when taken together these phenomena serve as powerful veils to the essence of Islām. The sheer abundance of these phenomena is staggering: numerous religious trends including traditional intellectual, spiritual, and legal schools; many historical cultural, tribal, national, linguistic, and purely nominal manifestations; as well as modern ideological and so-called "fundamentalist" trends and movements. Most of the above traditions, trends, and movements appear to, at least in some respect, contradict or conflict with one another. Is Islām primarily a personal spiritual path? Is it fundamentally a cultural or even national affiliation? Is its essence primarily an ideological viz., socio-politico-economic agenda? And so forth.

In the effort to approach the essence of Islām two phenomena are clearly central: the person of the Prophet of Islām Muḥammad (S)⁶ and the Qurʾān. Objectively, there was an Arabic-speaking human being in sixth- and seventh-century Arabia named 'Muḥammad', who invited people to something he called 'Islām'. Among the many words and expressions that rolled off of his tongue there was a particular subset flowing from a specific stream of consciousness. This quite specific subset of expressions and meanings constitutes *al-Qurʾān* (the Recital). And in the depths of the consciousness of the Prophet there was certainly some meaning, some intention, some vision, corresponding to the expression 'Islām' as it rolled off of his tongue.

However else Islām may manifest itself or how others may try to manifest it or embody it, the Prophet of Islām certainly meant something by the term 'Islām' and also acted on that intention. And that specific stream of consciousness was declared by the Prophet and by the Qurʾān to be the very Word of a Supreme

⁶ The abbreviation 'S' stands for the invocation of communion which Muslims express upon nearly every mention of the name of the Prophet.

We choose to begin our discussions of the Qurʾān by using the expression 'specific stream of consciousness', a term sufficiently general to embrace the phenomenon of revelation without committing the non-Muslim reader to the objective reality of revelation. That is, the Qurʾān has an objective reality and manner of coming into existence regardless of one's attitude to revelation.

and Unique Being and as encapsulating the essence of Islām. The pursuit of the vision originating in his consciousness and underlying the word 'Islām' – and, ultimately, that which moved him in pursuit of that vision – made him one of the most influential persons of human history. Moreover, that pursuit made and continues to make Islām a most powerful living force, even as filtered through the myriad phenomena that explicitly or implicitly, rightly or wrongly, claim its name.

If nothing else, the question "What is Islām?" ultimately invites each of us – Muslim or non-Muslim, monotheist or pagan, theist or secular – to objectively approach the Prophet of Islām and the Qurʾān. We do not seek a "new" Islām. We do not seek a "traditional" Islām or an "orthodox" Islām; a "fundamentalist" Islām or a "radical" Islām; nor a "reform" Islām, "liberal" Islām, or a "pluralist" Islām. Rather:

- Regardless of what anyone may want Islām to be, its *essence* lies with the one who proclaimed its vision and message, and with the specific stream of consciousness he proclaimed as encapsulating that vision and message;
- The *value* of the Islāmic vision and message is a function of the value of the Prophet and *his* specific vision on the one hand, and of the Qurʾān on the other;
- The degree to which a given phenomenon is Islāmic is the degree to which that phenomenon accurately reflects the Prophet and his vision on the one hand, and the Qurʾān on the other.

These three statements about essence, value, and the meaning of 'Islāmic' perhaps best encapsulate the most basic assumption upon which the present work is based.

An objective approach to answer our question, "What is Islām?", through the Prophet of Islām and the Qurʾān is not always easy. It calls for a *cognizance* and *recognition* of these two central phenomena. Although perfect knowledge of either is unlikely if not impossible, we can at least be hopeful that an attitude of objectivity will help us progress to increasingly accurate *reflections* of the essences of those two phenomena. By 'an attitude of objectivity' we mean the attitude that says that there is something to be

found that is not merely a function of our own whims and desires, and that it is possible to approach that something. With respect to Islām this means that there actually is an Islām to search for in the vision, message, and intentions of its Prophet. And even if we never reach the *essence* we can be hopeful of finding an accurate *reflection* that allows us to answer with some precision the question: "What is Islām?"

The remarks on the following pages are meant to be general, hopefully embracing and capturing some of the big picture of Islām. There are many books and studies on particular aspects of Islām, mostly focusing on some particular subset of perspectives, aspects, or phenomena deriving from or relating to Islām proper. In this work we attempt to not only present a fresh perspective that hopefully accurately and comprehensively reflects some rays of the essence of Islām, but also provide a *meta-structure* in which to situate themes which may focus on a particular set of Islām-related phenomena.

For example: Some works focus on the spirituality of Islām and/or spiritual traditions that *in some sense* – that is, more, less, or allegedly – derive from the original phenomenon of Islām viz., the Prophet and the Qurʾān. Others may focus on legal and social phenomena. In this work we cannot hope to capture the fine details of spiritual or legal phenomena that derive in some sense from the original phenomenon. What we *do* hope to capture – in a hopefully accurate reflection of the original phenomenon – is something of the relationship between the two. Through the representation of these kinds of relationships we hope that our meta-structure gives readers a means to place in proper context more specific works on Islām and the phenomena that in some sense derive from it. In addition, we hope that this meta-structure serves to help the reader evaluate the scope and focus of other works with respect to the big picture of Islām in its entirety. That is, a reader of a book on the vast topic of Islāmic social law should realize where social law fits in the larger meta-structure. And a reader of a book on Muslim spirituality should be aware of the place of spirituality in the more general meta-structure. This way one may avoid the extremes – if not sophistry and demagoguery – all too common among many writers on Islām who attempt to, for example, reduce it to only spirituality or to only social law, or who try to expunge one or the other from it.

For example: Scientists generally study nature with the attitude that, even if we never find a perfect explanation of it and its laws, we can ever-increasingly approach it if we try hard enough. Nature and its laws are not mere whims of scientists but rather they are objective in some appropriate sense.

We mentioned earlier that approaching the essence of Islām ultimately demands approaching the twin phenomena of the Qurʾān and of the Prophet. For our approach to have any chance of success a number of things must be kept in mind, two in particular:

- 1 The Qurʾān and the Prophet stand together in a truly *coupled* relationship. This point can hardly be overemphasized. To understand the Prophet one must study the Qurʾān; to comprehend the Qurʾān recourse to the Prophet is indispensable. Indeed, they constitute *one* phenomenon in a sense. To *decouple* the phenomenon of the Prophet from that of the Qurʾān or vice versa is to commit one of the worst follies as far as approaching the essence of Islām is concerned.

After all, whatever the Qurʾān really is, it originally came to humanity *through* the Prophet and *his* consciousness, not anyone else's. He did not merely sit in a bed and dictate it to others. He began putting it into practice from the first onset of its streaming through his consciousness until he passed away. The initial onset of this stream of consciousness immediately and in the first instance addressed the Prophet himself, not anyone else. The Prophet pointed to the Qurʾān as the basis of his personal behavior and his interactions with those around him. And he explained the meanings and applications of the Qurʾān to those around him. At the same time, the Qurʾān is the most *definitive* testimony we have today to the original phenomenon and essence of Islām. Its words still ring with us long after the passing of the individual through whose consciousness it streamed. It remains alive and present in a way that can *immediately* be touched, felt, and evaluated.

Yet its language and context is still inextricably tied to the Prophet, whom it addresses even today whenever anyone recites it. "Read! In the name of your Lord and Cherisher who created..." [96:1],⁶ it says to the Prophet, many hundreds of years after it was recited for the first time as, perhaps, the very first phrase of the Qurʾān itself. The Qurʾān and the Prophet are in many ways as coupled now as ever before. And the essence of Islām is as wrapped up with one of them as the other;

- 2 The pre-Classical Arabic of these twin phenomena is both ancient and subtle. One must place oneself as much as possible in the place of an Arabic ear hearing the Qurʾān or the Prophet for the first time. A certain *phenomenological* as well as *linguistic* sensitivity is needed to tease out and translate the basic connotations of these ancient expressions into modern written or spoken English. We will come across numerous instances where a one-to-one translation of expressions from Arabic to English is simply impossible. Moreover, the semantics of the Arabic language and its syntactic structure carry connotations which are nearly impossible to translate into English. Even further, the language of the Prophet and the Qurʾān does not *merely* parrot pre-Classical Arabic. It pushes the language into new territory, employing expressions in fresh and subtle ways beyond the conventions used by and the connotations expressed by the average or above-average Arab bedouin or city-dweller. Yet with *phenomenological* sensitivity we can hopefully approach accurate and precise reflections of the basic meanings and intentions of the relevant expressions and sentences spoken by the Prophet and the Qurʾān.

For the purpose of approaching the essence of Islām, the Arabic text of the Qurʾān is fortunately quite standard and stable. For approaching the Prophet the Qurʾān is a most important source as well. But the Prophet spoke many things that spring from and speak to the essence of Islām, words that do not flow through that specific stream of consciousness as did the Qurʾān. The Prophet performed numerous actions that express the essence of Islām, and not all of these are recorded in the Qurʾān. Thus we must approach the voluminous resources of the *Ḥadīth* or *Tradition* literature, which includes biographical and historical details as well as the guidance of the Prophet on virtually every aspect of the Islāmic vision that he promulgated. Unlike the Qurʾān, the *Ḥadīth* literature is not nearly as standardized. Rather, one must employ some consistent, reasonable, methodology for determining for any given tradition whether it is an accurate representation of either the teaching of the Prophet or of something that he did.

The *Ḥadīth* literature takes us to the Prophet through the medium of those who were around him, namely his *Companions* (*Aṣḥāb*) and his *Family* (*Aḥlu ʾl-Bayt*). These two groups

By 'phenomenological sensitivity' to Arabic we refer in part to a direct experience and placing in context of Arabic words and expressions, bracketing them from their later classical and post-classical uses.

Consider the two poles of a magnet. The north pole is not the south pole, but the two are coupled as aspects of a larger phenomenon, namely, that of a magnetic field.

⁶ [96:1]. In referring to the Qurʾān, the first numeral – in this case '96' – refers to the number of the quoted *sūrah* (phase or very loosely chapter) of the Qurʾān; the second numeral – in this case '1' – refers to the number of the quoted *āyah* (sign or very loosely verse) of the mentioned *sūrah*.

are not mutually exclusive. For example: The Prophet's cousin and son-in-law 'Ali was both a distinguished companion and a member of the Family. Virtually everything we know about the Prophet and the origins of the Qur'ān comes through these two sources, the Companions and the Family.

In approaching the essence of Islām through the Qur'ān and the Prophet, there is another very important consideration, namely, the *historical context* of these two phenomena. The nature of pre-Islamic Arabia, the relationship of the Prophet to his family and the larger tribe from whence it sprang, and the trials, tribulations, and triumphs he underwent during the twenty-three years of the streaming of the Qur'ān are each relevant to a fuller appreciation of what Islām is. The Hadith literature is of course the main source for an analysis and presentation of this context. We will provide glimpses of this throughout the body of this work. Of course, doing complete justice to the historical context vis-à-vis the essence of Islām would require a separate work.

Our objective in this work is to present the essence of Islām as much as possible in a *trans-historical* manner. That is, we hold that the essence of Islām *transcends* its historical context, though the historical context is useful for *approaching* that essence. We will make as many necessary references to that context as needed for our purposes. We intend to provide some more extended references to historical matters in a future augmentation to this book.

Both popular and specialized books on Islām in English tend to neglect the traditions narrated through the Family, a neglect we intend to balance in this work. From amongst the *early generations* of the Prophet's Family and his descendants, a number of particular figures stand out. Those figures were universally recognized by the extensive testimony of representatives of the different factions of the early Muslim community – including even some of the enemies of these figures – as honest narrators of traditions, masters of the Qur'ān, as well as true embodiments of the essence of Islām as taught by its Prophet and encapsulated in the Qur'ān. Given the serious divisions of the Muslim community such virtual unanimity is a welcome indicator that these individuals actually do reflect something of the original essence of Islām as transmitted to them from the Prophet through their

family line. As an Arabic saying goes, "The people of the house know best what's in the house."

The famous compendia of Hadith literature were compiled sometime after the gradual division of the community into two major *schools*. Despite the broad commonalities in content to be found across these collections, and regardless of the overall sincerity and honesty of their compilers, the actual selections of the compilers (and what they chose to *not* include) naturally reflect, in part, something of their allegiances. In this work we will benefit from the compendia collected by compilers of both schools. The particular scholastic allegiance of the compiler of a given compendium will not be a primary factor in our selection of any given tradition. Rather, each presented tradition will be selected on its own merit, based upon the determination that it accurately reflects something of the essence of Islām.

We shall see that Islām is essentially a form of activity. Based on the above considerations, this work considers the most general and fundamental dynamism that underlies the activity of Islām to be that of *walāyah*. As a corollary, this work considers the concept derived from *walāyah* as the best and most accurate mirror for the purpose of reflecting upon the mind something of the essence of Islām. Briefly, the word '*walāyah*' expresses the concept "dynamic loving". Through the concept of *walāyah*, virtually all of the ideas derived from the activity of Islām – be they cosmological, spiritual, or practical – can be reflected, understood, defined, and/or placed in the larger context of Islām as a whole. For example: Islām's *monotheism* (*tawhīd*), its rituals like *communion* (*ṣalāh*), and its laws like the prohibition of interest and usury; each turns out to be a special case of *walāyah*.

The concept of *walāyah* provides us a key to the basic unity of the various aspects of the essence of Islām, and how those aspects relate to one another. It provides a *benchmark* by means of which one can begin to evaluate of a given phenomenon whether or not it is really 'Islamic' at all. Perhaps more than any other concept derived from Islām, it provides a course upon which we can steer our way to approach and perhaps even reach the essence of Islām.

These are the so-called "Shī'ī" and "Sunni" schools. We will not get into the details of the differences between these two. Although each of these perspectives took about 250 years to crystallize into its present form, the origins of each trace back to the earliest days of Islām. We intend to explore this in a future work, perhaps an augmentation to this one.

The word '*walāyah*' proper comes from the Qur'ān [18:44]: *There! all walāyah belongs to Allāh the Real*, the verbal derivatives of that word can be found distributed throughout the entire book.

This extended essay is currently divided into two volumes:

By 'early generations' we mean the generation of the Companions, their students the *Talāf* (Talāfīn), and the students of the Followers.

Exordium.

- 1 *Islām, Sign and Creation* (which you are currently reading), hereafter abbreviated as *ISC*.
- 2 *Islām, Station and Process* (the sequel to this volume), hereafter abbreviated as *ISP*.



Together these two volumes constitute the first installments of what I call the *Islām-Dynamic Project*. The word 'dynamic' is chosen to mirror the active and receptive nature of Islām itself. Too often Islām is presented by Muslims and non-Muslims alike as a static or rigid structure of belief, ritual, and rules; or as a spiritual path divorced from practical life or vice versa. Yet the Qurʾān and the example of the Prophet demonstrate an emphatic commitment to movement and flow, to *dynamicity* in the development of the human being through each and every aspect of human life, cosmological, spiritual, and socio-politico-economic. All fit together dynamically in the progress of one's journey to direct knowledge and love of one's self, of creation, and ultimately direct knowledge and love God.

A NOTE ON THE SOURCES OF THE AHĀDĪTH USED IN THIS WORK: So as to maintain an easy-going flow in this essay, we have not overburdened this work with references for every *ḥadīth*. In the next planned installment of the Islām Dynamic Project we will provide a sourcebook, including the traditions and Qurʾānic references used in the first two installments, *ISC* and *ISP*.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: The web of *walāyah* embracing all to whom I owe a debt of gratitude is too great to capture in words. For special mention I would like to acknowledge the invaluable help of the following individuals: Abbas Mirakhor, Ali ibn Yusuf Al-Hamad, Ali Husayni, Anna Meenan, Muhsin Nakhid, and James Boyd.



Dear reader: May you enjoy this journey across the ocean of Islām, carried by the ship of *walāyah*.



∞ KNOWLEDGE OF ISLĀM, ISLĀMIC KNOWLEDGE ∞

1 Towards Defining Islām

1.1 *Islām is not ...*

ISLĀM IS NOT a "religion"; yet it manifests a powerful religious spirit. Islām is not pure cosmology; yet cosmic themes flow from it. Islām is not a mystical system; yet mysticism is at its root. Islām is not an ethical system; yet it primarily addresses human behavior. Islām is not an ideological program; yet it calls for ideological mission and purpose. Islām is not a mere sociopolitico-economic system, yet social, economic, and political matters are inseparably linked to it. Islām is certainly not a dogma or creed, though dogma and creed may be *distilled* from it. Hence Islām is definitely not a "faith"; yet faith is one of the stages of the Islāmic path towards the central aim of knowledge. Islām is not Law, yet it has a most sophisticated and non-optional juridical bedrock. Islām *projects* each of the above kinds of categories and more; yet it does not completely fit into a single one among them.

Islām is not a nationality or ethnicity; no ethnic, tribal, or linguistic group can make any exclusive claim to it. Islām is not named after any individual, not even its own prophet. Arab culture is not Islām; Subcontinent Indian culture is not Islām; African culture is not Islām; Iranian-Afghan culture is not Islām; Malay-Indonesian culture is not Islām. Yet one can find manifestations of Islām in each of the above mentioned traditions.

Eating *biryani* (a Muslim Indian lamb dish) does not make one a Muslim. Celebrating 'Id (an Islāmic festival) does not make one a Muslim. Having an Arabic name does not make one a Muslim. Wearing long clothes and a turban does not make one a Muslim. Even having Muslim parents does not make one a Muslim (except for a few limited legal purposes).

1.2 *Islām is ...*

Muḥammad (Ṣ), the Prophet of Islām, spoke pre-Classical Arabic; the Qur'²ān is also expressed in that language. One interesting feature of pre-Classical Arabic (henceforth just called "Arabic")

is the general scarcity of abstract nouns compared to Indo-European languages. On the other hand, verbs and verbal nouns such as *gerunds* abound in comparison, and ultimately rule the semantical, grammatical, and even lexicographical manifestations of Arabic. Even in Modern Arabic dictionaries one searches for nearly every given word, not by that word's alphabetical order, but by the alphabetical order of its verbal root which, in turn, denotes some activity.

Both the Arabian landscape and its people were very dynamic. The desert horizon rarely looked the same. Today the sands build a mountain; tomorrow it's gone. Cities were few and small. Various tribes roamed the desert as nomads, and even city-dwellers earned their living primarily by trade. Caravans continually crisscrossed the ever-in-flux landscape. Literacy, libraries, and other features of a stable civilization were few and far between. The Arabic language strongly reflects an emphasis on activities with very little emphasis given to concepts or even stable things. And the relation of things to activities is governed in Arabic by a very sophisticated and consistent system.

For example: The word 'key' names what in Arabic is called a '*miṣṭāḥ*', meaning, "that through which opening is effected". And virtually every word that follows the pattern of '*miṣṭāḥ*', such as '*miṣbāḥ*' ("that by which lighting is effected", viz. a lamp) and '*mikyāl*' ("that by which measuring weight is effected", viz. a scale), carries a similar connotation with respect to the verbal root, that is, "that by which a given activity is effected". So although, in the English language, 'key', 'lamp', and 'scale' have little in common other than being nouns, '*miṣṭāḥ*', '*miṣbāḥ*', and '*mikyāl*' together share precisely the same pattern of derivation from a verbal root in accordance with a particular function. In this case, the function is the carrying out of an activity with an implement appropriate to that activity.

In general, there are numerous Arabic noun-patterns, each corresponding with at least one kind of activity and/or function of a thing in accordance with an activity. The reason I have belabored this issue pertaining to the nature of the Arabic language is that it helps to give context to a fundamental point about the nature of Islām, one that can hardly be stressed enough. Namely, the word '*islām*' is a gerund that denotes or names a particular kind of activity. It is something that one *does* per se, as opposed to,

say, something one *believes* in per se. The expression 'I believe in Islām' (Translating '*a'ṭaqidu bi'āl-islām*') really makes no literal sense in pre-Classical Arabic.

The gerund '*islām*' is usually translated as 'submitting' or 'submission'. The gerund-pattern of '*islām*' is an instance of a fourth-order verbal pattern. The fundamental or ground gerund from which the fourth-order '*islām*' derives is '*salāmah*' or '*salām*'. The verbal idea connoted by this ground verbal pattern is "entering safety and security", or "becoming safe and secure". The fourth-order pattern has a number of connotations, including the *effecting* or *causing* of that which is connoted by the ground pattern. So from the gerund '*salāmah*' (meaning "becoming safe and secure") the corresponding fourth-order pattern '*islām*' basically connotes "making (something) enter into safety and security", that is, "delivering (something) over into (the) safekeeping (of someone else)".

From this basic idea, in Arabic usage it came to be short for "delivering oneself into security". To explain: The verb corresponding to the gerund '*islām*' is '*aslama*'. To express the idea "to deliver himself into (the) security (of someone else)" one would use the expression, '*aslama nafsahū*'. Eventually the '*nafsa-hū*' was usually dropped in practice. So '*aslama*' came to connote simply "to deliver oneself into (the) security (of someone else)". For short, one can translate '*aslama*' as 'to surrender oneself', or 'to submit oneself'. So '*islām*' can be translated as 'submitting oneself' or 'surrendering oneself' in the sense of 'delivering oneself into safety or security'. And as opposed to saying, "I believe in Islām", one would say, "I have delivered myself into safety/security" (simply '*aslamtu*' in Arabic). The connotations of these two sentences are of course quite different. The first says something about a state of mind while the latter talks about the carrying out of an activity.

Islām is a relational activity. That is, *submitting* or *surrendering oneself* involves submitting/surrendering to something or someone. *Delivering oneself into safety or security* involves delivering oneself into the safety/security of something or someone. What that something or someone is is not hard to discover. In the Qur²an we read the following:

For example:
Per se, one opens
a door (i.e., does
an activity). Per se,
one does not be-
lieve in opening
a door; one just
opens it.

NOTE: We use single-quote names of expressions (including words and phrases) to mention expressions; and we use double-quote names of ideas, concepts, propositions, and the like, to mention ideas, concepts, and propositions, and the like. Emphatized text is used for emphasis as well as for uncommon Arabic expressions, concepts, and named things, subject to the same convention for quotes.

⁶ [40:66]: As explained in the Exordium (page 14), '[40:66]' stands for *sarah* (very loosely chapter) 44, and *ayah* (very loosely verse) 66. Note: *bold italic type* is used for all quotations from the Qur'ān.

Say [Oh Muḥammad]:... I have been commanded that I deliver myself into the safety and security of the Cherisher and Lord of the Worlds. [40:66]⁶

[Said Abraham:...] Our Cherisher and Lord! Make us deliverers of ourselves to your safety and security, and our progeny a community who delivers itself to your safety and security! [2:128]

She [the Queen of Sheba] said: I have delivered myself, alongside Solomon, to the safety and security of the Cherisher and Lord of the Worlds. [27:44]

From the above it appears that to do Islām is to deliver oneself into the safety/security of the Cherisher and Lord of the Worlds. 'Cherisher and Lord' translates the single Arabic word '*rabb*'. But who/what is the Cherisher and Lord of the Worlds? This very question is asked in the Qur'ān in the context of an exchange between Moses and Pharaoh:

He [the Cherisher and Lord] said:... So go, both of you [Moses and Aaron] to Pharaoh and say, "We are the Message of the Cherisher and Lord of the Worlds".

...He [Pharaoh] said: And what is the Cherisher and Lord of the Worlds?

He [Moses] said: Cherisher and Lord of the heavens and the earth and everything between them. If only you had any certainty!

He [Pharaoh] said [mockingly] to those around him: Do you not hear this?

He [Moses] said: Your Cherisher and Lord, and the Cherisher and Lord of your first forefathers!

He [Pharaoh] said [to those around him]: Your "Messenger" who has been sent to you all is surely insane!

He [Moses] said: Cherisher and Lord of the Rising of the Sun, the Setting of the Sun, and all that is between them. If only you had any consciousness!

...He [Pharaoh] said: If you dare to take up with any god besides me, I will certainly make you one of my prisoners! [26:16, 23-29]

From this exchange we learn a number of things about the Cherisher and Lord and about the Worlds over which this being reigns. This being is

- The lover and nurturer (*Cherisher*); and sustainer and master (*Lord*) of the entire universe (*the heavens and the earth and everything between them*). This is the *universal* world among the Worlds;
- The master and nurturer of the entire human race (*your and your first forefathers*). This is the world of *humanity*;
- The master and nurturer of everything on the earth (*the Rising of the Sun, the Setting of the Sun, and all that is between them*). This is the world of the planet at large, the *local* world among the Worlds. Note that at Moses' mentioning of this point Pharaoh starts to get angry, as this point especially conflicts with Pharaoh's claims to lordship over the earth;
- To be acknowledged as a *god*, as Pharaoh realizes and points out.

From the above it is clear that the Cherisher and Lord of the Worlds is a figure of unique and universal influence, from the universal to the local, from the heavenly to the human. There is no sphere of natural or human activity that is outside of the scope of this being.

The Cherisher and Lord of the Worlds has a proper name, 'Allāh'. The Opening of the Qur'ān makes the identification:

'Praising is to Allāh, the Cherisher and Lord of the Worlds. [1:2]

So the activity denoted by the word '*islām*' would appear to be the activity of submitting, surrendering, and delivering oneself to the safety and security of Allāh, the Cherisher and Lord of the universe, the human race, and all affairs of this planet, both natural and human. The one who engages in this activity is denoted by '*muslim*', the present participle of the gerund '*islām*'. So Islām is the activity and a Muslim is one who engages in this activity.

1.2.1 *Islām has two fundamental senses, full and limited.*

We mentioned earlier that the verb '*aslama*' (gerund '*islām*') is, from a strictly linguistic point of view, elliptical in Arabic for '*aslama nafsa-hu*', meaning "to deliver himself to (the) safety and security (of someone)". Now in the Qur'ān we find something a little different. For example:

So if they argue with you [Oh Muhammad] say: "I have delivered my wajh to the security and safety of Allāh, and so has whoever followed me." [3:20]

Whoever delivers his wajh to the security and safety of Allāh and moreover acts out of deep awareness; then to him is his reward unto his Cherisher and Lord. [2:112]

In these two selections there is no ellipsis in '*aslama*'; that which is being delivered to safety and security is mentioned explicitly, namely, the *wajh* of the individual. Now the word '*wajh*' is extremely rich in its denotations: face, countenance, surface, front, aspect, purpose, course, aim, among many others. Taken together, those things named as '*wajh*' appear to share the common characteristic of being the outward appearance and direction of a given object. That is, given an object, its *wajh* is its outward frontal appearance and/or its direction of movement; in other words its *orientation*. So it's possible in the language of the Qur'ān, as opposed to general usage among the people, that '*aslama*' is generally elliptical for, not '*aslama nafsa-hu*' ("to deliver himself to (the) safety and security (of someone)"), but rather '*aslama wajha-hu*', meaning "to deliver one's outward activities and direction to (the) safety and security (of someone)". To put it simply in the context of Islām: to *orient* oneself and one's behavior towards Allāh.

An interesting thing to note is that, in Q 2:112 as well as two additional occasions in the Qur'ān, submitting one's *wajh* to Allāh is juxtapositioned against *acting with true awareness and cognizance* or *ihsān* (literally, *acting beautifully*). This is illustrative of the general point that one may submit outwardly and apparently, and yet not be completely aware and cognizant about it. That is, one may be a *Muslim*, one who engages in the outward activities of submitting to Allāh, without being truly aware about

either what one is doing or cognizant of who the One for whom one is doing it.

Corresponding to this point, it turns out that there are two important usages of the word '*islām*' in the Qur'ān and by the Prophet:

- The full activity of delivering every aspect of one's self to the safety and security of Allāh. Both one's outer actions and inner psyche and spirit are placed in motion or oriented to be submitted to the Cherisher and Lord of the Worlds;
- The limited activity of outwardly submitting to Allāh. Regardless of the intentions and motivations of the inner psyche or spirit, one's outer actions are placed more or less in outer conformity with submission to the Cherisher and Lord of the Worlds.

We will use the following convention to distinguish the two senses of the word '*islām*': When referring to the full activity, we will generally capitalize the initial letter (as in, "Indeed, Islām is a complete way of life"); when referring to the limited activity we will generally spell the initial letter in lower case and italicize the word (as in, "The activity of *imān* involves more than that of *islām*").

Each of these two usages of '*islām*' is very common in the Qur'ān and by the Prophet, and one must be sensitive to this when reading the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth. The second usage is generally juxtapositioned against one of two other activities, *imān* and *ihsān*. *Imān* is a two-part activity: placing trust and being secure in something or in the reality of something, and then activating or operationalizing that trust and security. To put it simply, *having dynamic belief*.

Ihsān, as mentioned above, is the operation of acting out of deep awareness and cognizance. We have given an example of the juxtaposition of *islām* against *ihsān*. Its juxtaposition against *imān* in the Qur'ān and by the Prophet is even more common. For example:

The desert Arabs say: "We have dynamically believed." Say [O Prophet]: "You have not dynamically believed. Say, rather, "We have [outwardly] submitted" [i.e., done

See Q 4:125

and Q 31:22.

For cognizance and its importance see the next Chapter 3.

See Subprinciples 2.2.2 for a more in-depth discussion of the various senses of the word '*islām*'.

Interestingly, the words '*islām*', '*imān*', and '*ihsān*' share the same fourth-order verbal pattern.

Towards Defining Islām.

islām in the limited sense], for dynamic belief has yet to enter your hearts." [49:14]

And the Prophet has said,

'Islām [in the limited sense] is through the tongue, and imān is through the heart.

That is, if one declares *islām* (in a way we will explain in 2.2.2) then that is one thing. But *imān* or having dynamic belief is quite something else altogether. One who has become operationally believing is denoted by the word *'mu'min'*, the present participle of *'imān'*. A *Mu'min* is thus a Muslim with operational belief.

'Islām in the limited sense has degrees. There is a bare minimum declaration with the tongue. Then there are degrees of activity commensurate with that declaration. One can conceivably engage in even the highest number of activities without *imān* or *ihsān*. This is still *islām* in the limited sense. But when *islām* in the limited sense is combined with *imān* and *ihsān*, then that is *Islām* in the full sense. From a slightly different perspective, we can say that the degree to which one is a Muslim in the full sense is the degree to which one combines *islām* (in the limited sense), *imān*, and *ihsān*.

Note that the Qur'ān places much more emphasis on *imān* than on *islām* per se. Allāh in the Qur'ān virtually never directly addresses Muslims (in the limited sense of *'islām'*) as a group. Rather the Qur'ān addresses the *mu'mins* (usually by means of the phrase, *'O you who have dynamically believed!'*); indeed, it addresses the latter much more than it addresses any other group of people. When referring to mere Muslims in the limited sense of *islām*, Allāh does not address them directly but asks the Prophet to do so.

1.2.2 *'Islām* is not a religion, but a *dīn*.

The category expressed by 'religion' is much too narrow to capture the scope of *Islām*, even in the limited sense of the word *'islām'*. Consider the following passage from the Qur'ān [109:1-6]:

Say [O Prophet]: O you all who conceal [the truth]!

*I do not adore and serve that which you adore and serve.
And you do not adore and serve that which I adore and serve.*

And I do not adore and serve that which you have adored and served.

And you do not adore and serve that which I adore and serve.

Your dīn is for you, and my dīn is for me.

The word *'dīn'* is extremely rich in its connotations. In this context it basically means "*modus vivendi*" ("way of living", "manner of living") and "obedience". In other words, a *dīn* is a (general) way of conduct in service of something. For short we will translate *'dīn'* with 'way'. The kinds covered in the category expressed by *'dīn'* include custom/habit or system of customs/habits, religion, ideology, praxis, conduct, or state of behavior. Depending on the context, sometimes the connotation "obedience" is stronger; sometimes the idea "way of conduct" is stronger. For each of the above examples, the concept "*dīn*" includes the connotation of actually following something, as opposed to mere belief. The word *'dīn'* is actually a gerund corresponding to a verb meaning "to follow a way of conduct". A *dīn* is something that one does; again, the emphasis (relative to English) on activity is present.

For example: When referring to Judaism as a way of life the Qur'ān does not say the equivalent of 'those who believe in or follow Judaism'. Rather it says something roughly equivalent to the expression 'those who judaize', meaning, "those who do the Jewish *dīn*". *Judaism* in the abstract is never mentioned in the Qur'ān.

Note that the sense of the word *'dīn'* is neutral with respect to divinity or spirituality. Given a *dīn*, it may have a divinity-based or spiritual aspect or it may not. Modern nationalism is thus a *dīn*. Liberalism is a *dīn*. Communism is a *dīn*. Indeed, secular humanism as a whole is a *dīn*.

The sense of *'dīn'* is also neutral with respect to scope. Given a *dīn*, it may cover life as a whole or it may just cover some aspect of living. Capitalism is a *dīn* in economics. Democracy is a *dīn* in politics. Emotivism is a *dīn* in ethics. Positivism is a *dīn* in philosophy.

Note that *ḥudūd* is the type used for *ahādith* ('*ahādith*' is the plural of '*ḥadīth*').

The triad *islām*, *imān*, and *ihsān* will be discussed in greater detail in Principle 2.1.

The word '*dīn*' is derived from '*dayn*', meaning 'debt'. We will briefly explore this in TSP, Chapter 1, on page 29. TSP is the sequel to this work; see page 18.

The hallmark features of a *din* are prescription and restriction of behavior. One who operates within the scope of a given *din* accepts that one must do certain things as well as not do certain things. A nationalist must put the national interests of his nation before that of others. He must not support the opponent of his nation during a time of war, even if his own nation is the aggressor. *Din*, along with the prescriptions and restrictions that come along with it, is also a hallmark of human society. Virtually everyone has a *din*. Even thieves have a *din* ("honor among thieves"). Without *din*, there is chaos; everyone is then completely free to do absolutely anything with no direction or consistency whatsoever. As the Prophet's grandson Husayn once said, "If you have no *din*, then be completely free!"

Although it is customary to speak of Islām as a *religion*, the Prophet and the Qurʾān view Islām in the much broader context of a *din*. Put another way, Islām does not see itself as another religion amongst religions, but rather a *din* amongst *dins*:

'Who has a better way (dīn) than one who orients himself [literally, delivers his wajh] to the safety and security of Allāh, and moreover acts with true awareness and cognizance ...?' [4:125];

'Do they seek other than the Way (dīn) of Allāh? While yet whoever is in the heavens and on earth has delivered itself to the safety and security of Allāh, willingly and unwillingly ...' [3:83];

'Whoever seeks a way (dīn) other than deliverance of oneself to the safety and security of Allāh (Islām), it will never be accepted of him. [3:85]

The last claim, of course, is quite a strong one. Namely, every manner and aspect of human conduct must be turned over to the safety and security of Allāh, the Cherisher and Lord of the worlds. There is no reference to a particular "religion" per se. Indeed, the Qurʾān claims that the activity of *islām* (in some primordial or inward sense) has existed in all places and times; indeed, it is a feature of the entire universe. It is a feature of many ways that existed before the Prophet of Islām, especially that of Abraham:

And when his Cherisher and Lord said to him [to Abraham]: "Deliver yourself [to me]!" He replied: "I have delivered myself to the Cherisher and Lord of the Worlds."

And Abraham bequeathed this to his children, and so did Jacob: "O my children! Allāh has chosen the Way (dīn) for you, so do not die except as deliverers of yourselves [to Allāh]." [2:131-132]

Again, the references to the activity of Islām are not to a club, church, or other formal structure or institution. Rather it is to a general attitude and orientation. This attitude and orientation is an inward pre-ritual, pre-church, pre-institution one. Indeed, it is a pre-religious orientation along a Way. Over time, as the post-prophetic age of Islām gave way to a civilization and empire, this point appears to get lost or muddled. Dogmatism, exclusivity, and rigidity begin to set in. Yet, as we will see in Principle 3.11, even if we consider Islām from the point of view of its formal and/or institutional manifestations, the activity of Islām in no way begins with dogmas or creeds.

Islām as a *din* or way is divinity-based and universal in scope. It is divinity-based because the role of Allāh is central and a certain cosmological commitment to this centrality is fundamental (as we will explain in Principle 4.3). It is also universal because it leaves no area of human behavior outside of this fundamental cosmological commitment to the role of Allāh, as the dialogue between Moses and Pharaoh illustrates. As we will see, things that we commonly consider outside the scope of religion such as politics, economics, and civil law are just as much within the scope of deliverance to Allāh as ritual and spirituality, because the *din* of Islām is universal in scope. The issues discussed in modern ideologies like liberalism and materialism are equally important issues in Islām for, in principle, no area of human life is outside of its scope.

Islām is not pluralist⁶ in the least (in the common relativistic sense of 'pluralist'). The objectivity of truth and reality is central in the Qurʾān:

So do they choose to be dynamically believing in falsehood, and to reject the blessings of Allāh? [16:72]

Subprinciple 2.3.1 contains a discussion of the cosmic sense of Islām.

The expression "Deliver yourself" translates 'ashim', the imperative form of the gerund 'islām'.

The 'unwillingly' at the end of the second following selection from the Qurʾān (3:83) is in part a reference to the Islamic notion that natural features of human behavior like the beating of the heart are literally "Muslim", oriented towards Allāh, regardless of whatever *din* the owner of the heart may try to follow. The Qurʾān also frequently uses 'who' and 'whoever' to refer to apparently inanimate or non-human entities.

⁶ Pluralism: the view that there is no ultimate truth to a given matter, or that truth is not an objective feature of reality. According to pluralism, the proposition "The earth is round" may be true for one person but not for another, and neither is ultimately "right". However, Islām, while maintaining the objectivity of truth, does emphasize tolerance just as emphatically. See TSP, page 194.

Ch 1

"The Straight Way", translation of 'al-Sirāṭu al-Mustaqīm', is one of the names given by the Qur'ān to Islām. See [1:6] for example.

Despite the heavy emphasis on the objectivity of truth throughout the Qur'ān, there is an equally strong emphasis on tolerance of the views of others. See TSP, page 194.

Do not confuse truth with falsehood and/or knowingly hide the truth. [2:42]

And say [O Prophet]: Truth has come, and falsehood has perished; surely falsehood is bound to perish. [17:81]

They have no knowledge of it. They follow naught but mere conjecture. And mere conjecture cannot free anything from truth! [53:28]

But despite this neither is it strictly exclusivist. It does stake a very strong claim that Islām as developed in the Qur'ān and by the Prophet is a complete, universal, final, and ultimate *dīn* – there is no escaping that. Islām is *the* Way, or at least the *Straight Way*. Yet the Qur'ān and the Prophet also recognize an inward pre-institutional attitude of self-deliverance to Allāh as constituting the core of Islām, and that the attitude, orientation, or activity of Islām *per se* is present throughout creation and human history, including other religions and cultures. The degree to which a given *dīn* of some particular scope has any value in Islām is the degree to which it is in harmony with the attitude of self-deliverance to Allāh. This is an important topic and we will discuss it further in TSP, Subprinciples 2.2.1 and 2.2.2.



2 Islāmic Knowledge

2.1 Seeking knowledge is virtually a precondition of Islām.

The above discussion of Islām invites many questions, among them:

- We know that Islām fundamentally involves submitting and surrendering to Allāh. But how exactly is this accomplished? What do we have to *do*?
- We know something of *what* Allāh is according to the vision of the Prophet and from the Qur'ān, namely the Cherisher and Lord of the Worlds. But *who* exactly is Allāh? How do we recognize Allāh? What is the nature of our relationship to Allāh?

The first is a kind of question pertaining to what it is we need to *do* to in order to deliver ourselves into the safety and security of Allāh. The second is a kind of question pertaining to what we need to *know* that gives context to the activity of Islām. These two kinds of question are not mutually exclusive. *Knowing* or at least *seeking to know* who Allāh is a kind of activity. And finding out the outward prescriptions and restrictions of the *dīn* involves a search for knowledge. As a *dīn*, Islām places a heavy emphasis on knowledge and the seeking of knowledge. Indeed, the seeking of knowledge is almost a *precondition* of Islām.

The Prophet emphasized the seeking of knowledge on so many occasions and in so many contexts that the number of *ahādith* on the issue is staggering. In one of the most authentic traditions the Prophet states,

The seeking of knowledge ('ilm) is obligatory on every Muslim. Ah! Surely Allāh loves the seekers of knowledge.

And in one of the most famous traditions among Muslims the Prophet is reported to have said,

Seek knowledge, even unto China.

In the Qur^ʿān, knowledge and learning are emphasized again and again by Allāh, in many different ways. It is not only the responsibility of every individual Muslim to seek knowledge, but every Muslim community must expend a portion of its human resources to seek a *deep knowledge of the dīn*:

It is not appropriate for the dynamically believing to go forth altogether [on a mission]. 'Why not have - from every group of them - a party go forth and become deeply learned in the dīn, so when they return to their community they can warn them in order that their community might be mindful?' [9:122]

Knowledge has no limits in Islām, not even for the Prophet:

Say [O Prophet]: "My Cherisher and Lord, increase me in knowledge!" [20:114]

So for a Muslim, it is obligatory to always seek more knowledge than what one already has. As we will discuss in *ISP*, Principle 2.1, this emphasis on the continuity of seeking knowledge throughout one's life is an application of the *principle of growth* (tazakkīy).

We will soon talk about one of the most important traits of *īmān* and *ih̄sān*: the awe (*khashyah*) of Allāh. Knowledge is a necessary condition for the occurrence of this awe:

It is only the knowers who are awed of Allāh. [35:28]

2.1.1 Islām criticizes mere speculation and subjective opinion.

In the Qur^ʿān, *ʿilm* (knowledge) is frequently contrasted with something else, *ẓann*. With respect to the Qur^ʿān in particular, the word *ẓann* is used to refer to subjective opinion, mere conjecture, or suspicion. Along with the main idea, the concept "*ẓann*" may also carry the connotations of a lack of either firm evidence or objective investigation. As we mentioned before, the Qur^ʿān maintains a clear position on the objectivity of truth. Coupled with the obligation to seek knowledge, *ẓann* is severely criticized:

The word *ẓann* is also used in Classical Arabic to refer to various states of *near-knowledge* or *certainly based upon plausible or probable evidence*. However, that sense is generally not used in the Qur^ʿān.

Islām is built upon five foundations.

They have no knowledge of it. They follow naught but mere conjecture. And mere conjecture cannot free anything from truth! [53:28]

They have said, "What is there except our life in this world? 'We die, we live, and nothing destroys us but Time'. But they have no knowledge of that; they do nothing but merely conjecture. [45:24]

A particular branch of *ẓann* is *ra'y*, that is, *mere subjective opinion*. Imām ʿAlī has said,

'Whoever tries to follow of way of conduct to Allāh through mere subjective opinion will spend his life drowned in confusions.

The point that the Prophet and the Qur^ʿān are emphasizing is that it is wrong to believe or hold something to be the case on a mere whim, feeling, or affiliation to a tribe, community, or nation. "I feel that such-and-such is true," or "My tradition says that such-and-such is true," is no substitute for actively and objectively seeking truth:

'They said: "Enough for us is that upon which we have found our ancestors." 'What? Even if their ancestors were not knowing a thing and were not guided?! [5:104]

We have covered the basic, pre-structural senses of the word 'Islām'. We now seek to *know* how the Prophet and the Qur^ʿān express the unfolding of the pre-structural attitude and activity of deliverance into the safety and security of Allāh into a rich and comprehensive *dīn*.

2.2 Islām is built upon five foundations.

Of the many activities that constitute Islām in the full and comprehensive sense, a number are fundamental. Among the most genuine and well-known traditions of the Prophet are those enumerating the *foundations* or *pillars* (*arkān*) of Islām. The overwhelming majority of these mention five foundations. Even in those that mention more than five the additional ones can be

Although today its practice leaves much to be desired, every sane individual raised by Muslim parents is obliged, around the onset of puberty, to personally review the *dīn* of Islām for him- or herself, and to make a conscious decision about following it. For even Islām in the limited sense must be based on a decision of conscience. Among other things, this insistence upon the conscious choice of each individual to follow Islām reflects the degree of confidence the Prophet and the Qur^ʿān maintain with respect to this *dīn*.

An individual tradition is called a '*ḥadīth*'. The plural of '*ḥadīth*' is '*ahādīth*'. The body of literature that is comprised of *ahādīth* is called 'the *Ḥadīth*'. Example of this usage: 'In the *Ḥadīth* literature we find many *ahādīth* on the topic of the five pillars. Each *ḥadīth* may be found in multiple sources.' See also page 16.

Ch

'Abu' means "father of"; 'ibn' means "son of". 'Abu Ja'far' ("Father of Ja'far") is an example of a kunyah, a special kind of nickname used by Arabs and usually based on lineal relationship.

easily reduced to the main five. And in the ones that mention less than five (usually three), the missing ones may be unfolded from the ones that are mentioned. Generally, those that mention exactly five foundations are basically one of two forms of a single tradition. Both forms are genuine and authentic. In fact, they are both *consecutively transmitted (mutawātir)*, meaning that they have been transmitted by so many narrators from the Prophet, his Companions, or his Family in so many ways and wordings that it is virtually impossible to be falsely attributed to them.

For each form of this *hadith* we use the narration of Imām *Abū Ja'far Muḥammad al-Bāqir*, ibn 'Ali, ibn Ḥusayn, ibn 'Ali, the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet. *Abū Ja'far* was also a descendant of the Prophet through his daughter and, after his immediate father ('Ali ibn Ḥusayn), was the most esteemed personality amongst the *Ṭabī'ūn* (the generation of Muslims immediately following the Companions). His chain of narration goes back to the Prophet through his paternal lineage to Imām 'Ali, and from 'Ali to the Prophet. Here are the two forms of the tradition of five foundations as he narrates them:

- 1 *Islām is built upon five foundations: communion (ṣalāh), pruning [of wealth] (ṣakāh), fasting (ṣawm), pilgrimage (ḥajj), and dynamic loving (walāyah). And nothing has been called to the way dynamic loving has been called to.*
- 2 *Islām is built upon five foundations: the witnessing (shahādah) that there is no god but Allāh, and that Muḥammad (Ṣ) is His adorer-servant and messenger; establishing communion; giving the pruning [of wealth], pilgrimage to the House, and fasting during Ramaḍān.*

Although each of these traditions is consecutively transmitted, the second one is certainly more well-known than the first. Yet the first is more comprehensive in a very important way that we will discuss momentarily. But the four other foundations: communion, pruning, fasting, and pilgrimage, are the same in both forms of the tradition. Many other traditions, as well as the Qur'ān, attest to the importance of the order here. Communion is more foundational than pruning, which in turn is higher than the last two. As for the last two, some versions mention fasting

after pilgrimage, like the second version mentioned above; others mention fasting before pilgrimage. The most well known order among Muslims is communion, pruning, fasting, and pilgrimage. This is probably because pilgrimage is a once-in-a-lifetime obligation based on financial ability and other related factors, whereas the rest are much more a part of the normal daily and annual life of the average Muslim. Yet many of the most authentic traditions mention pilgrimage before fasting. So there appears to be a sense in which the Prophet placed the value of that once-in-a-lifetime pilgrimage above that of fasting in general.

It is important to note that traditions in this regard *do not* state that Islām is the aggregate of these five activities. Rather, these five activities constitute a collective *foundation* for Islām in the full sense ("Islām is *built upon* five foundations"). In addition, each has a clearly prescribed minimum manner of being fulfilled. Completing (or making the intention and effort to complete) these five obligations constitutes one level of *islām* in the limited sense. But Islām in the full sense – and even *islām* in limited sense – is much more than these five. Rather, these five foundations constitute a necessary *propaedeutic* to both Islām as a *full dīn*, and to *islām* as the limited *outer shell* of that *dīn*. That is, these five activities provide the foundation for both the *full* as well as the *outer* orientation of the Muslim individual and the Muslim community to delivery into the safety and security of Allāh. Put another way, the five foundations constitute the *beginning* of the journey of Islām, not the final goal.

The structure, ethics, and inner meanings of communion, pruning, fasting, and pilgrimage belong to *dispensational walāyah*,⁶ which we introduce in *ISP*, Chapter 5. Let us now look at the first principle, which is the foremost foundation of all.

2.2.1 *Walāyah is the most fundamental foundation of Islām.*

The two forms of the tradition above are in apparent conflict over the first principle. One says that the first and foremost foundation of Islām is *dynamic loving (walāyah)*. The other says that the *witnessing (shahādah)* of the oneness of God and the servanthood and messengership of Muḥammad (Ṣ) is the first. It is not difficult to resolve this. First we have to clarify the meaning of 'walāyah'.

2

Consider the pillars that hold up a house or other building. One lives or operates in, not the pillars but the house as a whole. The house, in turn, is supported by the pillars. If the pillars are strong the house will be strong; if the pillars of the house are weak then it will easily collapse no matter how nice and wonderful the rest of the structure is. Another example is the skeleton of the body: By itself the skeleton can do nothing but it is the fundamental support of the entire human body.

⁶ See also the third kind of Islāmīc knowledge, the *established sunnah* (2.7).

Ch

'Walāyah' is among the richest and most comprehensive words in the Arabic vocabulary. It is also a gerund and denotes a relational activity between two things. The most fundamental activity denoted by 'walāyah' is *coming or working to be in the closest possible proximity to*. That is, when one thing has walāyah with another, they are so close that one can hardly find anything standing between them. From the basic idea of proximity flow a number of other connotations of 'walāyah', the most important being a particular and distinctive notion of *polar dynamic loving*. Thus the relationship of walāyah combines two activities, both of which unfold from the basic relationship of close proximity:

1 *Pure loving and affection; attachment and intimacy*

This is a kind of love that moves the one doing the activity of walāyah to seek closeness with the beloved. With this sense of attachment comes intense fondness and devotion. This aspect of walāyah can be *symmetrical*. That is, the respective roles of the two partners in a walāyah-relationship do not change the basic attitude of affection and attachment. In ideal circumstances a father's love and devotion to his daughter per se need not be different from her devotion and attachment to him (though in a real relationship it may be).

2 *Dynamic loving*

The kernel of love at the heart of walāyah may be manifested in a number of ways. One of the most important of these manifestations is *comforting*. We are using 'comfort' here in the sense "strengthening aid", "assistance", or "support". A popular phrase whose meaning comes close to capturing this idea is 'giving comfort to the enemy'. In this case of walāyah, comforting is the giving of help, not out of pressure or for mercenary reasons, but out of genuine love for the helped party. This aspect of walāyah is frequently *polar*. That is, the respective role of each of the two parties to walāyah has a bearing on the precise manifestation it projects with respect to each party.

Consider the walāyah-relationship of a father and young daughter, for example. In normal or ideal circumstances the

walāyah of a father with respect to his daughter is in some respects quite different from that of her walāyah to him. He unselfishly and benevolently comforts her, that is, out of love he helps her, guards over her, feeds and clothes her, and looks after her every need. He gives her solace when she is sad or hurt, and helps her to grow, develop, and reach for and realize her maximum potential. He may discipline her if need be, but always out of pure love and never out of assuaging his own ego, and always with the appropriate balance. The daughter in this case (again, under normal or ideal circumstances) will return this walāyah of her father by allegiance and loyalty to him, loving and comforting those who love him, disliking and disassociating from those who want to harm him, and honoring and obeying him in those matters involving his guardianship over her. She is sad and hurt when disciplined, but as she grows she becomes thankful and appreciative that he cared enough to do so. His walāyah with respect to her is one of guardianship and authority; hers with respect to him is one of allegiance, loyalty, and obedience. But the crucial point is that the guardianship and authority of the father over his daughter; and the allegiance, loyalty, and obedience of the daughter to her father; *each springs first and foremost from the mutual activity of loving and desire of mutual proximity*.

If the pure, unselfish love of the father dissipates or vanishes, his guardianship and authority will likely either

- become tyrannical and oppressive. He will then become, if not a completely hated figure, then at least someone to run away from and to disassociate herself from. The daughter will suffer immensely, especially if she maintains that pure love for him that is the source of her walāyah to him. She may choose to continue suffering out of pure love. Or eventually she may grow to hate him or even pray for his death;
- or virtually disappear so that he hardly looks after his daughter's needs at all. As he neglects her, she may become undisciplined, lose her confidence and/or sense of security, or display some other negative manifestation on the account of being unloved by her own father.

Ch

Similarly, to the degree the pure, unselfish love of the daughter dissipates or vanishes, her allegiance, loyalty, and obedience will dissipate as well. She may become spoiled, ungrateful, and recalcitrant. She may consider the *walāyah* of her father as cruel and oppressive even if it is just the opposite. If he maintains his pure love for her he will suffer immensely but patiently on her account. Or he may regard her as just a lifelong burden to him from which to seek escape.

On the other hand, if

- each *maintains* the essence of that benevolent affection that is the root of *walāyah*; and
- each *manifests* that benevolent affection in the way appropriate to his/her respective role in their outwardly polar relationship;

then each becomes immensely happy and joyful in the other, and respectful and appreciative of the polar role each plays in the mill-wheel of *walāyah*. They can work through pain, sorrow, and difficulties through one another; each can depend on the other. And the loss or absence of one leaves an abyss of longing in the heart of the other. This is an ideal and healthy *walāyah*-relationship.

This, then, gives something of the gist of *walāyah*: comforting out of love, proximity, and/or the longing for proximity. In a polar relationship between two things, one pole of *walāyah* manifests as guardianship and authority; the other pole manifests as allegiance, loyalty, and obedience. If the love that is the essential axis between these two poles diminishes or vanishes, then *walāyah* diminishes or vanishes accordingly. The one who *does* *walāyah* is called a '*waliyy*'. One of the most interesting features of *walāyah* is that, in the *walāyah*-relationship of guardian to ward, each is a *waliyy* of the other. Put another way: *The axis of an ideal, healthy walāyah-relationship is mutual and symmetrical loving; the manifestation of this axis at the two ends of the axis is polar and complementary.* That is, each *symmetrically* loves the other, though the relationship per se of guardian to ward is a polar one.

A note on translation: When the word '*waliyy*' is used with respect to the pole of *walāyah* that encompasses guardianship

and authority, it may in most instances be translated accurately as 'comforter' (in the specific sense we explained earlier). For example:

Allāh is the Comforter of those who are dynamically believing; He extracts them from all manner of darkness into light.... [2:257]

When the word '*waliyy*' is used with respect to the pole of *walāyah* that encompasses loyalty and allegiance, it may in most instances be translated accurately as 'devotee', meaning "ardent, strongly attached, and intimate follower and lover" as in the common Arabic expression, '*waliyyu Allāh*' (devotee of Allāh):

Indeed! The devotees of Allāh will have no fear upon them nor will they grieve. [10:62]

In cases where the polarity between two parties participating in a given *walāyah*-relationship is not so strong (as between friends and siblings), and/or where the manifestations of guardianship and loyalty are mutual (that is, not restricted to only one side of the relationship), it may be translated by both 'comforter' and 'devotee':

As for the dynamically believing men and the dynamically believing women, they are the comforters and devotees of one another.... [9:71]

Surely the unjust are comforters and devotees of one another, while Allāh is the Comforter of those who exercise awareness. [45:19]

There is another way to approach the two poles of a polar *walāyah*-relationship: The pole that manifests as guardianship and authority is the *walāyah* that is *given*; the pole that manifests as allegiance, loyalty, and obedience is the *walāyah* that is *given back or returned*. For example: When a mother carries a child from conception to term, the *walāyah*-relationship is primarily unidirectional, from the mother to the child. That is, the mother *gives* *walāyah* to the child until it is born. After giving birth to a son, the mother continues to give *walāyah* to him. From the

Closely related to '*walāyah*' is '*waliyyah*'. Their exact relationship in pre-Classical Arabic is hard to determine. But in Classical Arabic '*waliyyah*' is generally used to refer to guardianship, mastership, and authority in particular. And over time even the original sense of dynamic loving was lost.

kernel of their initial bond that began during pregnancy, and in response to his mother's cherishing, gradually the son develops stronger and stronger feelings of love for his mother. Eventually the son will manifest allegiance and loyalty to his mother, constantly seeking her good pleasure, even despite any mistakes he may make along the way. This constitutes *walāyah* from the son returned to his mother in response to the original *walāyah* given by the mother.

Analogously, the ultimate and absolute love, cherishing, and lordship of Allāh constitutes the *walāyah* that is given to creation. The singularly, ultimately and absolutely focused *walāyah* of creation towards Allāh is the *walāyah* that is returned to Allāh in response. This singularly and absolutely focused *walāyah* of response is Islām.

2.2.2 *Shahādah* is manifestation and application of *walāyah*.

Let us return to the original question: How do we resolve the apparent conflict between the version of our tradition stating that *witnessing (shahādah)* is the foundation principle of Islām, and the version that states that *walāyah* is the fundamental principle? The solution is quite simple: *Shahādah (witnessing)* is a specific manifestation and application of the principle of *walāyah*. Consider again our example of father, daughter, and an ideal *walāyah*-relationship between them. If someone asks the daughter about who takes care of her, she will bear witness that her father is her guardian and caregiver. She can say this because throughout her life she has seen his guardianship out of love for her in action for as long as she can remember. That is, she has a clear vision of who he is as well as of her allegiance to him. When she says, "I bear witness that this man is my waliyy, my comforter and guardian", then she is expressly acknowledging his role in the *walāyah*-relationship (guardianship and authority) and implicitly acknowledging her role in response (allegiance and obedience).

Now the *shahādah* is composed of two manifestations or acts of *walāyah*: one pertains to Allāh ("I witness that there is no god except Allāh"); the other to the Prophet of Islām ("And I witness that Muḥammad (Ṣ) is his adorer-servant and messenger"). Let us first look at the aspect pertaining to Allāh.

Consider that the basic meaning of the word 'god' is "a being that is, with respect to some domain or sphere of life, an ultimate source of love, comfort, guardianship, or authority, and/or deserving of allegiance, service, and adoration". By the expression 'ultimate source' we mean "a being with control or decision-making power – with respect to its sphere of influence – that is absolute and independent of any other being". Recognizing, serving, and adoring a real or presumed god involves an attitude of *walāyah* on the part of the adorer (namely affection, allegiance, and obedience), and a reliance upon the *walāyah* of the real or presumed god (that is, its comfort and aid in some sphere or domain). So the declaration, "I witness that there is no god except Allāh", is a manifestation of the attitude of *walāyah* as applied to the Supreme Principle of Islām, Allāh, the Cherisher and Lord of the Worlds. This manifestation and attitude takes place at two levels, *reality* and *response to reality*.

- 1 At the level of *reality*, one is acknowledging and attesting that there *really is* one single, ultimate source of *walāyah*, who is the lover, comforter, guardian, and authority over all. This is independent of any action on the part of the one attesting;
- 2 At the level of *response*, one is pledging one's love, allegiance, loyalty, and obedience to the ultimate source of *walāyah*. That is, one's own active response to the existence of Allāh and His *walāyah* is now involved.

Thus the first and foremost foundation of Islām is the pledging of *walāyah*, manifested as love, allegiance, and loyalty, to the Ultimate Source of true love, comfort, and hence guardianship and authority (*walāyah* given by Allāh). This is the first manifestation or act of *walāyah* in Islām.

The second manifestation or act of *walāyah* also encompasses and operates at the levels of *reality* and *response*:

- 1 At the level of *reality*, one acknowledges and recognizes that Muḥammad (Ṣ) *really is* the messenger and adorer-servant of Allāh. The messengership of Muḥammad (Ṣ) in itself constitutes a kind of relative (as opposed to ultimate or absolute) *walāyah* that he brings to the world on behalf of Allāh. So recognizing

Note that our definition of the concept "god" intentionally makes no reference whatsoever to the supernatural. That is, what makes something a god or not has nothing to do with whether it is physical, spiritual, or neither. We will return to this point in Principle 4.3.

Another example of implicit acknowledgement: When you say, "She is my boss", you are implicitly acknowledging your duty to be obedient to her in whatever matter she carries authority over you.

who Muḥammad (S) really is involves acknowledging his relative *walāyah*. By recognizing him as the adorer-servant of Allāh one is recognizing that the *walāyah* that is returned to Allāh, denoted by the expression 'adoration-service', is perfected in Muḥammad (S); that is, he is the adorer-servant of Allāh *par excellence*, the supreme 'Waliyy, Devotee, and Dynamic Lover of Allāh;

- 2 At the level of *response*, one is responding to that reality, to the relative *walāyah* of the Messenger for the world, by the pledging of love, allegiance, loyalty, and obedience to the Prophet, Messenger, and greatest 'Waliyy of Allāh, Muḥammad (S).

Put another way: At the level of reality, when one says, "I witness that Muḥammad (S) is his adorer-servant and messenger", one is saying that there exists an individual through whom Allāh has communicated a message (hence, "messenger"), as well as someone who acts purely and solely on behalf of Allāh and in response to His *walāyah* (hence, "adorer and servant"). At the level of response, the attitude of *walāyah* dictates that if one embraces the *walāyah* of Allāh, one must also embrace the *walāyah* of the one sent on behalf of Allāh. So the allegiance and loyalty to Allāh that follows from *walāyah* to Allāh will also flow to the Prophet. Although the Prophet is *not* a god or deity, he represents the Supreme Deity. That is, the *walāyah* of the Messenger is not absolute, independent, or ultimate; rather it is relative to the *walāyah* of the Ultimate One and most accurately reflects it.

Together, these two acts or manifestations of *walāyah* – one focused on Allāh in an ultimate manner, and the other focused on the Messenger of Allāh in a manner relative to the ultimate *walāyah* of Allāh – constitute the complete *shahādah* that is the herald of entering the *dīn* of Islām. If the acknowledging and pledging of the complete *shahādah* start or remain at the level of mere lip service, then that *shahādah* constitutes merely the beginning of *islām* (limited sense); if the acknowledging and pledging come from the heart and are followed through, then the *shahādah* represents the beginning of Islām (full sense, encompassing the beginnings of *imān* and *iḥsān*).

At its simplest, the *shahādah* is the formal declaration of *islām*, that is, *islām* in the limited sense. Put another way, with the enunciation of the *shahādah*, at least *islām* in the limited sense begins. As soon as one professes the *shahādah*, one has formally entered the *dīn*. From this mere acknowledgement of the absolute, ultimate *walāyah* of Allāh, and the relative, focused *walāyah* of the Messenger of Allāh, Islām as a *dīn* begins, progressing to higher degrees of *islām*, and from *islām* to *imān* and beyond.

It is very important that one should not confuse this formal entrance into the *dīn* of Islām with the *informal*, primordial, and pre-institutional attitude of *walāyah* towards the Ultimate One, an attitude that constitutes the inner spirit of Islām. So the *shahādah* is a formal or institutional manifestation of an inner spirit, a spirit which is none other than *walāyah*. And this dynamic of *walāyah* flows through all things (*walāyah* from Allāh) and from all things (*walāyah* towards Allāh):

The seven heavens and the earth and whoever is within them glorify Him. Indeed there is nothing except that it glorifies Him through praising Him, although you do not understand their glorification. Surely He is always 'Torbearing and Forgiving. [17:44]

'Do they seek other than the 'Way (dīn) of Allāh? 'While yet whoever is in the heavens and on earth has delivered itself to the safety and security of Allāh, willingly and unwillingly ... [3:83]

It is this inner spirit of Islām, the spirit of *walāyah* directed towards the Ultimate, that makes Islām, taken in a non-institutional sense, a universal activity common to many of those who formally label themselves "Muslims" and to many of those who do not so label themselves. It is this inner spirit of Islām that allows us, following the Qur'ān, to call great figures of humanity who lived before the Prophet of Islām, such as Abraham, Moses, Mary, and Jesus, and even figures not mentioned in the Qur'ān as "Muslims." We will further explore the relationship of the formal and pre-institutional manifestations of Islām in Chapter 2.2.2.

The importance of *walāyah* in Islām cannot be overestimated. It is the axis about which the mill of Islām revolves. It is the key which opens the door to every sub-aspect of Islām. It is the *course*

The Arabic word 'tashīb', translated here with 'glorification', is extremely difficult to translate exactly. Its precise relation to *walāyah* is discussed on page 109.

upon which the journey of Islām must be traveled. When *walāyah* is lost, when *dynamic love* is lost, Islām loses any and all meaning, regardless of the husk or outer shell that remains behind. We intend to expand this point throughout the remainder of this work.

Ch

2.3 *All walāyah ultimately comes from and is due to Allāh.*

The following selections from the Qurʾān make the connection between Islām and *walāyah*:

[Joseph said:] O my Lord and Cherisher!... You are my Comforter in this world and the hereafter. Receive me as one who delivers himself to your safety and security, and attach me to the righteous! [12:101]

Allāh is the Comforter of the dynamically believing; He extracts them from all darkness into the light. As for those who conceal [truth], their comforters are all [manifestations of] Rebellion. [2:257]

Say [O Prophet:] My Comforter is Allāh, who gradually sent down the Book; he receives the dynamic love of the righteous. [7:196]

The third selection is particularly interesting and profound. What we have translated as 'receives the dynamic love of' is a derivative of '*walāyah*' that signifies a kind of *receptivity*. This selection indicates that Allāh both gives and receives *walāyah*, consistent with the semantic point that *walāyah* is a two-way activity. In this case, the dynamic loving and comforting that Allāh projects over and gives to the Worlds is not a one-way street; it provokes a *response*, positive or negative. A positive response to the *walāyah* given by Allāh constitutes the *walāyah* which is returned to Allāh. *This positive response to the walāyah of Allāh is the walāyah that constitutes the fundamental activity of Islām.*

As we will discuss in Principle 2.1, when this positive *walāyah* is full to the point of *righteousness* (as alluded to in two of the above selections) one becomes a true *waliyy of Allāh*. In this case, as we explained earlier, we do not translate '*waliyy*' as 'comforter'

All *walāyah* ultimately comes from and is due to Allāh.

(given the infinitely polar relationship between Allāh and humanity), but rather as 'devotee'. As we will discuss, the *walāyah* of a *righteous adorer and servant* (that is, a *devotee*) is a kind of dynamic love that *approaches* a pure reflection of the *walāyah* originating from Allāh. Allāh's own reception of this *walāyah* of the devotee provokes a response: the deepening of Allāh's own *walāyah* with respect to that devotee. This interplay between the *walāyah* of Allāh the Comforter and that of the righteous adorer and servant or devotee is a continuous and ever-deepening dynamic that does not cease.

Yet ultimately, all *walāyah* comes from Allāh and returns to Allāh. One of the most comprehensive *āyat* in this regard states,

There! all walāyah belongs to Allāh the Real. [18:44]

The above translation cannot hope to completely capture the full import of the original Arabic here. There are a lot of important subtleties in the Arabic. Among the connotations of the original expression is a dual meaning:

- Any received act of dynamic love whatsoever ultimately comes from Allāh. Love, comfort, mercy, devotion, cherishing, and the guardianship, and authority that flow from these, in any and every domain or age, originates from Allāh alone. The rotation of the seasons reveals the *walāyah* of Allāh. The dynamic love of parents for their children is a manifestation of the *walāyah* of Allāh. The emphatic prohibition against interest/usury (as well as monopolies) is a part of the *walāyah* of Allāh;
- The dynamic love of every creature deserves to be directed ultimately to Allāh. Love, devotion, attachment, adoration, and the allegiance, loyalty, and obedience that follow from these, in any and every domain, should be oriented *ultimately* to Allāh alone. Just as everything good *initiates* from the *walāyah* of Allāh, so should the *response* to that *walāyah* be directed to its source. Love of nature is ultimately the love of Allāh. Obedience to parents in good things is love of Allāh. But if they ask you to commit a crime then one must refuse, again out of love and allegiance to Allāh. Behaving justly to one's fellow human being is love of Allāh. But devotion or service to tyrants and oppressors

'*Āyat*' is the plural of '*āyah*', which names the smallest textual division of the Qurʾān.

If a grandmother gives a jewel to her son to give to his daughter, then the daughter should thank her father for passing it along. But the *real* thanks should go to her grandmother, of course.

That is, "You are my 'Waliyy, my Dynamic Lover. You guard and protect me out of your love for me."

Consider the *walāyah* of a mother over her son. If he responds *positively* he will cherish her and devote himself to her. If he responds *negatively* he will become ungrateful and a burden to her.

conflicts with the love of Allāh, and must be avoided at all costs. Finally, the very ability to respond to the *walāyah* of Allāh, and to return it through love, devotion, and obedience; this is also a part of the *walāyah* of Allāh.

Ch

The prime means of approach to the *walāyah* of Allāh is the Prophet. As the Qur'ān says,

O you all who have dynamic belief! Be aware of Allāh, and seek the means of approach to Him! [5:35]

Part of the awareness mentioned here is the awareness that our every act of *walāyah* should be oriented towards Allāh. At the same time, our *walāyah* to Allāh can only occur through the various *means of approach* that he has established. The greatest means of approach in this regard is the Servant and Messenger of Allāh, Muḥammad (S). Allāh says in the Qur'ān:

The Prophet has more walāyah with the dynamically believing than they have with their own selves... [33:6]

That is, the Prophet is *closer* to the *Mu'mins* (the dynamically believing) than they are to themselves. He *dynamically loves* them more than they love themselves. He is the relative *waliyy* and *comforter* of the *Mu'mins* through whom the absolute and ultimate *walāyah* of Allāh flows. Following from this, he has more right to the authority and allegiance of the *Mu'mins*, even more than they have over their own selves. In the Qur'ān we read:

O you all who are dynamically believing! Obey Allāh and His Messenger. And do not let yourselves be oriented to a walāyah other than His even while you are listening to him! [8:20]

And obey Allāh and His Messenger in order that you may be entered into Mercy. [3:132]

In the Arabic, one notes that the Qur'ān uses the single verb 'obey' for both Allāh and the Messenger. This indicates that obedience to the Messenger is obedience to Allāh. There is never a question of conflict between the two. The key point that must

never be forgotten is that obedience to the messenger is always relative to the absolute dynamic love or absolute *walāyah* of Allāh.

Another point: The expression which I have translated as 'oriented to a *walāyah* other than His' is normally translated with something like 'turned away from', which only indirectly captures the point. Consider a man who is in love with a woman, and then falls in love with another, neglecting the first. The first woman may say something to the man such as, "you let her turn you away from me." That is, a ray of the man's *walāyah* which was devoted to the first lady is now devoted to the second. Something about the second lady captured his attention, and he *responded* by allowing something of his own activity of *walāyah* to be focused in another direction. Put another way, he *allowed* some manifestation of the *walāyah* of the second lady (be it her beauty, voice, wealth, or some other combination of things) to provoke a transfer of some of his *walāyah* of the first lady to the second. This transfer was in part a conscious or subconscious *reception*, *response*, or *choice* on the part of the man. So when one "turns" away from A, it is to the *walāyah* of B.

The following *āyah* also illustrates the virtual identification of the *walāyah* of the Muslim towards Allāh with his *walāyah* to the Prophet:

Whoever obeys the Prophet has definitely obeyed Allāh. And as for whoever lets himself be oriented towards another walāyah, then Allāh has not made you [O Prophet] their keeper. [4:80]

2.4 'Walāyah is absolute and relative.

Another way of expressing the point of the previous subsection is as follows: the polar *walāyah*-relationships within creation itself are relative, not absolute. This relativity has two aspects, *internal* and *external*:

1 Internal

Asymmetric relationships are frequently in internal flux. Consider again the above relationship between mother and son. In the beginning, the mother is the comforter of the son and the

The expression is 'atawalla' 'anhu'. The first word in this expression is a derivative of 'walāyah'.

Even in the case of simple distraction, when something distracts you and you respond, there is a kind of two-way *walāyah* involved, even if it is of low intensity or for something very small. For *walāyah* flows through all things.

This may also be translated, 'other than his', the pronoun 'his' in this case returning to the Prophet, not Allāh.

son is the devotee of the mother. As the son gets older and more mature, he begins to actually provide comfort to the mother. As the mother moves into old age and loses her faculties the son may take charge of his mother's affairs entirely and care for her and cherish her the way she did for him when he was a child.

At the same time, as her son becomes successful and responsible the mother begins to express loyalty and allegiance to her son. She seeks his advice and assistance in her affairs. The dynamic of *walāyah* between them thus takes on elements of both comforter and devotee. Both elements remain in internal flux throughout the *walāyah*-relationship. That is, the polar poles of *walāyah* that characterize the relationship do not remain the same but change throughout the relationship. That is, they are not absolute poles but are rather relative, with respect to the internal structure of the relationship.

2 External

Within creation, each *walāyah*-relationship is relative to the rest of the world external to it and to the Ultimate Source of *Walāyah*. So the loyalty of a son to his mother ideally should stop at the point that his mother treats another human being or creation with injustice. It stops at the point where his mother asks him to commit a crime against another creation.

The cherishing and guardianship of the mother ideally should stop at the point where the son uses that cherishing and guardianship to commit crimes against others. For example: He may stay at her home until he uses that home as a base for criminal activity. That is, no *walāyah*-relationship within creation is absolute; each one must operate in a larger context.

In Islām, every *walāyah*-relationship must be placed in the larger context of the *walāyah*-relationship between Allāh and creation. In its internal structure, the *walāyah*-relationship between Allāh and creation is *infinitely* polar: Allāh is ultimately, always, and exclusively the Comforter; creation is always in the grip of the *walāyah* given by Allāh, no matter how high it grows and develops. Externally the *walāyah*-relationship between creation and Allāh must be *absolutely* focused. With respect to any and every

walāyah-relationship within the world, creation must always direct and return that *walāyah* absolutely and ultimately to Allāh and to no one else; every other such relationship is only *relative*. It is the ultimacy and absoluteness of the *walāyah* given and the *walāyah* returned that make the *walāyah*-relationship between creation and Allāh singular and unique:

There! all walāyah belongs to Allāh the Real. [18:44]

At the same time, some relative *walāyah*-relationships are especially privileged within the overall absolute *walāyah*-relationship between Allāh and creation. When a *walāyah*-relationship is so-privileged, it constitutes a means of approach to the return of Allāh's *walāyah*. In Islām, one of the most important such *walāyah*-relationships is the *walāyah* between creation and the Prophet.

2.5 Islām: is the *din* of love.

The *din* of Allāh, Islām, is ultimately a *din* of love. A companion of the aforementioned Abu Ja'far Muhammad al-Bāqir reports,

I was with Abu Ja'far when a recent arrival from Khurasān entered; traveling on foot. He exposed his lower legs and feet; both were heavily chapped. He said, "Nothing brought me here from whence I came except the love of you, the Family of the Prophet". Abu Ja'far replied, "By Allāh! Even if a stone were to love us He would gather it up with us [on the day of Resurrection]. Is the 'Din [Islām] anything but loving (hubb)? Surely Allāh says, Say [O Prophet]: If you have come to love Allāh, then follow me! He will love you. [3:31]" Then he said, "He loves whomsoever migrates to them [the Prophet and his Family]. Is the 'Din anything but loving (hubb)?"

Khurasān is a region on the borders of Central Asia spanning northeast Iran and northwest Afghanistan. Abu Ja'far lived in Madinah in west-central Arabia, nearly two thousand miles away.

The principle of loving is at the heart of the *din* of Islām. The *walāyah* of Allāh is pure dynamic love. The response ideally should be the pure, dynamic love of the respondent, that is, of the *muslim* in the pre-formal sense. In practice, the Muslim may only respond with his or her tongue. This is the minimal level of response that constitutes Islām in the most limited sense. But in the

full sense Islām is the complete orientation of one's own *walāyah* or dynamic love to the direction of the source of all *walāyah*: Allāh. It is active engaging in a *walāyah*-relationship with Allāh.

2.6 Safety and security are aspects of *walāyah*.

The dynamic love or *walāyah* of Allāh manifests itself in many ways, including authority and guardianship. Concomitant to these are *safety* and *security*. That is, Allāh keeps those under His *walāyah* safe and secure. To be under the *walāyah* of Allāh has two aspects:

1 Involuntary (apparently)

This is the safety and security Allāh provides whether or not one asks for it. The alternation of the seasons, the tides, the winds; the beating of one's heart, breathing, one's health; and innumerable other things that go noticed but are usually unnoticed. We add 'apparently' after voluntary because, according to the Qur'ān, everything under Allāh's *walāyah* in this sense actually *does* positively respond, delivering itself into the *walāyah* of Allāh:

'While yet whoever is in the heavens and on earth has delivered itself to the safety and security of Allāh, voluntarily or involuntarily. [3:83]

'Then He said to the Heaven and to the Earth: "Come voluntarily or involuntarily!" They replied, "We have come voluntarily." [41:11]

2 Voluntary

This is the safety and security Allāh provides as a conscious response to His *walāyah*. That is, one recognizes the *walāyah* of Allāh and then consciously delivers oneself over to it, hence obtaining safety and security. This is the activity that is Islām.

Since safety and security are aspects of *walāyah*, the *dīn* of Islām is fundamentally the activity of conscious response and deliverance to the *walāyah* of Allāh.

SUBTLE POINT: Safety and security are ultimately features of the human heart and its consciousness (see the marginal note on page 89). Even when the outward physical, social, economic, or other conditions are dire, painful, or sad; the heart of the *Mu'min* is always safe and secure. The outward safety and security that is a feature of Islām – outward orientation towards Allāh – is a sign of the inward security that is provided by *īmān*. See also page 27.

2.6.1 Positive *walāyah* is incomplete without negative *walāyah*.

Finally, note that there are another two kinds of *walāyah*:

1 Positive *walāyah*

This is the *giving or returning* of one's dynamic love, and the concomitants of that love, to another being. This is the *walāyah* we have been discussing up to now. Normally or ideally, a mother in a true *walāyah*-relationship with her son gives him her love and devotion, and exercises guardianship and authority over him out of that love and devotion. A young daughter attached to her father in a healthy *walāyah*-relationship will return him her love and devotion, as well as her allegiance and obedience. In the context of Islām, a Muslim in the full sense returns the dynamic love of Allāh with love, devotion, loyalty, and the allegiance and obedience which are concomitant to love, devotion, and loyalty.

2 Negative *walāyah*

This is the *withholding* of one's dynamic love, and the concomitants of that love, to another being. Normally or ideally, a mother will withhold her love from someone who wants to harm her son, will disassociate completely from that someone, and will fight to the bitter end anyone who tries to harm him. A young daughter in a *walāyah*-relationship with her father will withhold her love from his enemies, will disassociate herself completely from them, and deny them her loyalty, allegiance, or obedience. In the context of Islām, a Muslim in the full sense withholds his love and devotion from that which is out of harmony with the *walāyah* of Allāh; will disassociate himself from those who seek

to harm the person, family, or followers of the Prophet of Allāh, and deny them his or her loyalty, allegiance, or obedience. Allāh in the Qurʾān warns the dynamically believing again and again to refrain from offering *walāyah* to the enemies of the Prophet or of the dynamically believing. For example:

Ch
"Awliyā", is the plural of "walīy".

O you who have dynamically believed! 'Do not take My enemy and yours as comforters (awliyā')!...Allāh only forbids you from receiving the walāyah of those who fight you on account of the 'Dīn, who expel you from your homes, or who facilitate others in expelling you. As for those who receive their walāyah, they are wrongdoers. [60:1,9]

Say [O Prophet]: "He is only one source of walāyah [i.e., god], and I completely disassociate myself from that which you take as partners [in walāyah]." [6:19]

He [the ancient prophet Hūd] said: "I take Allāh to witness – and witness! all of you! – that I completely disassociate myself from that which you take as partners besides him [in walāyah]. So you may all scheme your worst and give me no respite...If you receive another walāyah, then [in any case] I have surely conveyed to you that with which I was sent to you." [11:54–55, 57]

Negative *walāyah* is just as important as positive *walāyah*; one can only truly dynamically love something or someone to the degree that one completely disassociates himself from the *walāyah* of anything or anyone that is in disharmony with the *walāyah* of that something or someone. One cannot fully dynamically love Allāh except by active disassociation from the *walāyah* of anything or anyone in disharmony with the *walāyah* of Allāh. This brings us to the role of justice in Islām.

2.6.2 "Walāyah is manifested through knowledge and justice.

We have explained how and why *walāyah* is the foundational pillar of Islām. Its first and principle manifestation is *shahādah*: the witnessing of Allāh and the witnessing of the messengership of Muḥammad (Ṣ). But what exactly is this witnessing in the context of Islām in the full sense? Perhaps the fullest exposition of

this principal manifestation of *walāyah* is expressed in the following selection from the Qurʾān. Indeed, all of Islām is enfolded within these words:

Allāh has witnessed that there is no ultimate source of walāyah except for Him; so have the angels and those who have knowledge, standing through mutual justice. There is no ultimate source of walāyah except for Him, the Exalted, the Wise.

Surely the dīn unto Allāh is deliverance of oneself into [the] safety and security [of Allāh] (Islām). [3:17–18]

In the above passage, those who do the activity of *shahādah* are divided into three categories: Allāh, the angels, and those who have knowledge. What does it mean for Allāh to witness? The angels? We leave these questions for the later on. But of these categories, only one may possibly encompass human members. That is the category of "those who have knowledge, standing through justice".

Now *shahādah* is, as a manifestation of *walāyah*, the first pillar of Islām. In the above passage from the Qurʾān, those who do *shahādah* have been implicitly restricted to these three groups; human beings may only fit in the third. Then note that at the beginning of the very next *āyah* we read the statement, "*Surely the dīn unto Allāh is Islām*".

So two things have been concatenated: the categories of those who do the first pillar, *shahādah*; and a statement establishing Islām as the *dīn* of Allāh. Now a Muslim is one who does Islām, one who delivers himself into the safety and security of Allāh. The manifestation of the first pillar of this deliverance is *shahādah*. A Muslim must do this. Since a Muslim cannot be Allāh or an angel, it follows that to be a Muslim one must have knowledge and stand for justice. Since knowledge and justice are at the heart of *shahādah*, and *shahādah* is the manifestation of *walāyah*, it follows that *knowledge and justice constitute the central manifestation of doing walāyah viz., of dynamically loving Allāh*.

We discussed knowledge and its importance earlier. Now knowledge and action are coupled in Islām. *To act without knowledge is to act in vain*. The Prophet has stated,

The relation of 'ilāh' ['god'] to 'walāyah' will be explored more fully in Chapter 4.

Whoever acts without knowledge corrupts more than he sets aright.

So knowledge is a prerequisite to action, and Islām is an activity. But note that the aforementioned selection from the Qur^ʿān places a condition on it. To be a witness to the oneness of Allāh as the ultimate source of walāyah, one must have knowledge. This is a necessary condition of Islām. But it is not sufficient. Something more is needed, something involving one's relationship with the rest of creation. It is not enough to know: One must use one's knowledge for the establishment of justice. Knowledge itself will not effect walāyah; only when it is put to the cause of justice does dynamically loving Allāh take place. Knowledge cannot stand alone without justice.

The necessity of manifesting knowledge through justice is a special case of the general rule that knowledge must be acted upon. *To have knowledge without putting it into action is self-destructive.* The Prophet has also stated:

The knowers are two types of individual:

- 1 One who acts upon his knowledge: he is saved;
- 2 One who does not act on his knowledge: he is destroyed.

The son of Muḥammad al-Bāqir, Ja'far al-Ṣādiq,⁶ narrates the following ḥadīth that sums up the relation of knowledge and action:

Knowledge is tied to works. So whoever knows, works; and whoever works, knows. And Knowledge cries out to 'Works; either 'Works responds or else Knowledge leaves him.

In the earlier selection from the Qur^ʿān, the specific action tied to knowledge is justice (*qist*). Like 'islām', 'walāyah', and 'shahādah', 'qist' is a gerund signifying "acting justly". Thus the justice we are talking about here is an active justice, not justice in the abstract. Moreover, 'qist' denotes not only acting justly but also making justice manifest or clear. For example: A victim of a crime usually does not merely want justice. He also wants to know and see that the perpetrator has been brought to justice. The victim

wants manifest justice. So the people of knowledge are required to not only effect justice, but to make it shine bright. This is the heavy responsibility of Islām.

In the Qur^ʿān Allāh mentions that He loves the people of clear and manifest justice:

Say [O 'Prophet]: My Cherisher and Lord has commanded me to actively manifest justice. [7:29]

And effect reconciliation between them [two fighting parties] with justice, and establish manifest justice between them. Surely Allāh loves the manifestly just. [49:9]

Allāh loves justice; it is a central part of His Universal 'Walāyah. The response of creation to Universal 'Walāyah must thus mirror the Justice of Allāh. Justice is a fundamental manifestation of positive walāyah oriented towards Allāh. Indeed, manifest justice is a criterion by means of which one may determine whether positive walāyah is truly directed towards Allāh or not:

O you who have dynamically believed! 'Be those who stand for manifest justice, witnesses to Allāh, even if it be against yourselves, your parents, or those who are close to you; even if it be against someone poor or rich, for Allāh has more walāyah [than anyone else] with both of them. And do not follow your personal whims and desires and let them prevent you from being just. And if you deviate or turn away from justice, then surely Allāh is well-informed of all that you do. [4:135]

O you who have dynamically believed! 'Be those who stand for Allāh, witnesses to manifest justice. And do not allow some hatred of a people to afflict you so that you do not act justly. Be just! It is closer to awareness. And be aware of Allāh! Surely Allāh is well-informed of all that you do. [5:8]

Note that in the first *ayah* it says, "Be those who stand for manifest justice, witnesses to Allāh"; and in the second, "Be those who stand for Allāh, witnesses to manifest justice". That is, standing through justice is standing through Allāh; and being a witness

Across the Qur^ʿān Allāh mentions at least nine categories of Muslim that he loves. See 75:7, Principle 2.6.

Ch

⁶ In a future augmentation to this work, we will say more about this important sage, one of the most important in the history of Islām.

That is, "acting upon what one knows engenders yet more knowledge".

⁷ *Qist* is thus a special case of 'adl or acting justly in the most general sense.

to justice is a being a witness to Allāh. Also, justice recognizes no boundaries, be they personal, filial, class-based, or any other basis of distinguishing one human being from another. Positive walāyah oriented towards Allāh is choosing the walāyah of justice over the walāyah of yourself or your loved ones. If a mother's son injures another child unjustly, then the mother must choose the walāyah of justice to the injured party over her son. If she does so, then she has placed her walāyah of her son in the path of walāyah to Allāh. This is Islām in the true sense. If she strives to protect her son from justice then she has, to that degree, left the walāyah of Allāh for that of tyranny or rebellion:

As for those who conceal [truth], their comforters [givers of walāyah] are all [manifestations of] Rebellion. [2:257].

The degree to which one is a Muslim is the degree to which one places any given instance of walāyah in harmony with the walāyah of Allāh as manifested through justice. And the degree to which one leaves Islām is the degree to which one chooses the walāyah of any given thing over the walāyah of Allāh. In the case of filial relations, a mother's walāyah of her son is laudable as long as she does not prefer that walāyah over justice.

2.6.3 Definition: Islām is the way of walāyah.

As we have seen, to at least superficially enter the road of Islām is very simple; just say, "I witness that there is no god (ultimate source of walāyah) except Allāh, and I witness that Muḥammad (S) is His adorer-servant and messenger." One step above this superficiality is to perform the outer formalities of communion, pruning, fasting, and pilgrimage. But this limited islām is not an objective; it is only a very first step. As mentioned earlier, the Allāh in the Qur'ān never even directly addresses Muslims in the limited or superficial sense, though it sometimes asks the Prophet to do so:

The desert Arabs say: "We have dynamically believed." Say [O Prophet]: "You have not dynamically believed. Say, rather, 'We have submitted,' for dynamic believing has yet to enter your hearts." [49:14]

Allāh only speaks directly to the dynamically believing, criticizing them and exhorting them to true walāyah:

O you who have dynamically believed! Why do you say that which you do not do? It is truly loathsome unto Allāh that you say that which you do not do. [61:2-3]

Islām in the full sense embraces much more than this. The act of doing the shahādah with the tongue alone, plus the other four acts of communion, pruning, fasting, and pilgrimage, do not equal or amount to Islām. Islām is built upon these five pillars, but it is not identical to these five. These five merely constitute a propaedeutic or prolegomena to Islām.

We are now in a position to give a working definition of the concept "Islām". To deliver oneself into security and safety is ultimately to deliver oneself into walāyah. Self-deliverance is something that must be done voluntarily and willingly; it constitutes a positive response to the walāyah of something or someone else. On this basis, here is our working definition of Islām:

'Islām is the dīn (or way) of positive walāyah (or dynamic loving) returned in response to the walāyah of Allāh given to creation. Walāyah returned to Allāh is the essence of Islām. The core of the activity of walāyah is love; it is manifested through knowledge and the doing of justice.

As a corollary to this, we proffer the following postulate:

The concept of each activity that makes up Islām can be defined or analyzed in terms of walāyah.

The concept of walāyah thus provides us with the following:

- A powerful unifying conception by means of which every aspect of Islām can be either defined or at least placed in context;
- A criterion for determining of any given phenomenon to what degree it is actually Islāmic, that is, to what degree it is in harmony with the essence of Islām, walāyah.

Ch

If Islām is the way of *walāyah*, then what remains is to explain how the principle of *walāyah* unfolds itself in the context of Islām as envisioned by the Prophet and encapsulated in the Qurʾān. We have talked in general about dynamic loving, knowledge, and justice. To be a Muslim in the full sense is to respond to the *walāyah* of Allāh through *knowing* and *manifesting justice*. But when Islām talks about knowledge and justice as the necessary and sufficient conditions of the activity of *walāyah*, we must ask questions such as:

- What is knowledge in Islām? What is the knowledge that, when made manifest, engenders justice?
- What is justice in Islām? What is the criterion of justice?

As we discussed earlier, justice in Islām is a case of putting knowledge into action; and that without knowledge, action, and hence justice, cannot truly be done. Rather, one "corrupts more than one sets aright". Therefore we turn our focus to the issue of knowledge.

2.7 There are three kinds of Islāmic knowledge.

One of the most concise and comprehensive descriptions of what exactly constitutes *knowledge* in the context of Islām is contained in the following authoritative tradition of the Prophet, narrated by *Mūsā al-Kāzīm*:⁶

Once, the Messenger of Allāh (Ṣ) entered the mosque; a group of people were there surrounding someone. He [The Prophet] asked, "What is this?". It was said, "An 'allāmah". Then he said, "What is an 'allāmah?" So they told him, "He is the most knowledgeable of the people regarding the genealogies of the Arabs and their historical context, the Days of Ignorance," and the poetry of the Arabs". The Prophet (Ṣ) replied, "That is a knowledge that does no harm to someone ignorant of it, and does not benefit someone who knows it". Then the Prophet (Ṣ) said: "Knowledge is only three: the Firm Sign, the Just Duty,

and the Established Tradition. Anything other than these is superfluous."

Before discussing the three categories of knowledge, let's say a few things about this narration and its context. First, notice that the man in the mosque was called an 'allāmah'. This word is a derivative of the Arabic word for knowledge that refers to an extremely and exceptionally learned individual. In our own times we can compare an 'allāmah to a *university distinguished professor*; not just a professor, but someone exceptionally distinguished from his peers and colleagues. The city of Madinah, where the Prophet lived and where his mosque was located, was along an important trade route. The person described as an 'allāmah was probably from out of town, and just passing through.

It is important to note just how much significance the Arabs attached to the various specialties of the so-called "allāmah". Arabian society was extremely tribal, where one's place in society was nearly a pure function of one's tribal status. If you were captured by a rival tribe during a disturbance, the only thing that might save you from death is that you have a third- or fourth-cousin on your mother's side of the family in that tribe. Coming from a powerful or important tribe might help one to receive justice for an injury, whereas an ex-slave with no tribe at all could not expect to be treated with justice at all unless he was "adopted" by someone in a tribe of some significance. Specialists who could determine the exact degree of consanguinity (be it brother, uncle-nephew, cousin, father-son, and so forth) between any two individuals through physical examination alone were common. So tribal genealogy was one of the most important sciences to the Arabs of that time. For the Prophet to dismiss it as merely "superfluous" must have come as quite a shock to his listeners. The same could be said for poetry, which the poets of Ignorance raised to a level of eloquence unmatched in Arabic before the arrival of the Qurʾān.

In the above narration knowledge has been restricted to three branches or sciences. We will briefly mention what is meant by the three expressions the Prophet used to denote these sciences, saving a more detailed explanation for the succeeding chapters.

Consanguinity: the quality of being descended from the same ancestor.

⁶ *Mūsā al-Kāzīm* was the son of Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, and the grandson of Muḥammad al-Bāqir. In a future augmentation to this work, we will say more about this important figure.

⁷ "The Days of Ignorance" was used to refer to the age before the coming of Islām.

When connected to a succeeding word, the 'h' sound in 'ayah' becomes a 'y' sound, as in 'al-ayatu al-muhkamah'.

The first science mentioned by the Prophet is the *Firm Sign* (al-ayatu al-muhkamah). Of the many words comprising the vocabulary of the Qurʾān, there is hardly a single word as fundamental as 'ayah'. We have translated it as 'sign', which is probably the best we can do in English. An *ayah* or sign is something that stands in relation to something else such that, if one obtains cognizance of the sign, one immediately obtains cognizance of that something else. Consider a red stop sign at the corner of Bush Street and Clinton Avenue. A driver familiar with the rules of operating a motor vehicle in the United States will recognize by that sign that there is a law on the books that says, in effect, that anyone driving a motor vehicle must come to a complete stop at Bush & Clinton. Hardly any driver at all will have actually read the legal digest containing the actual law. But by having cognizance of the red stop sign at Bush & Clinton, the driver immediately comes to have cognizance of the particular law governing that intersection.

Not only is the red stop sign at Bush & Clinton a sign of a particular law, it is a *firm* and *unambiguous* sign. So if you recognize the stop sign, drive through it, and are then pulled over by one the local authority's finest, you cannot say, "Well, officer, I did not realize that the stop sign was referring to the intersection of Bush & Clinton; I thought it was referring to Washington & Jefferson". This is because, for anyone familiar with U.S. traffic laws, a red stop sign at Bush & Clinton will be as firm a sign as can be. Now for someone who is *not* familiar with U.S. traffic laws the red stop sign will not be so firm. Indeed, such a one should not be driving a motor vehicle at all until he learns to recognize symbols like red stop signs as firm signs.

What the Prophet and the Qurʾān mean by the expression 'firm sign' is a clear and unambiguous sign of Allāh and His *walāyah*. The science of the firm sign is the science of cognizance or recognizing the signs of Allāh in order to have cognizance of the following:

There are three kinds of Islāmic knowledge:

- 1 Allāh, His names, and His attributes;
- 2 The nature of Allāh's relationship to Creation and that of Creation to Allāh;
- 3 The post-mortem *destiny* of creation in general, and humanity in particular.

These three issues are *cosmological* matters. They embrace what may be properly called '*cosmological walāyah*'. Cosmological *walāyah* embraces the cosmic *walāyah* that Allāh gives to creation through His signs in the macrocosm and the microcosm, by means of which creation may have cognizance of Him. Cosmological *walāyah* also embraces the response to Allāh's cosmic *walāyah* that constitutes the cognizance and recognition of Allāh. Notice that this science was mentioned by the Prophet *before* the other two sciences. This is significant, because more of the Qurʾān deals with cosmological *walāyah* than with any other topic.

The next science mentioned by the Prophet is the *Just Duty* (al-farīdatu al-quotedilāh). The word 'just' here translates 'ādilāh', which literally means "balancing". This science deals with ethical and moral qualities which aim to be balanced. For example: 'Don't be foolhardy; don't be cowardly; rather, be brave. Bravery is the balance between foolhardiness and cowardice. More specifically, the just duty is concerned with the process of cultivating *islām*; from *islām* it covers the development of *imān* in its various stages and characteristics such as gratitude, patience, righteousness, honesty, justice, struggle, and forbearance. From *imān* it shows the way to the levels of *ihsān*: from awareness (*taqwā*) to the heights of certainty (*yaqīn*) and bliss (*ridwān*).

The process of cultivating these prime qualities and states is the *spiritual journey* (*sayr wa sulūk*) from *islām* to *imān* to *ihsān*. The subject matter of the Just Duty is thus spiritual, and constitutes what we will call '*spiritual walāyah*'. Spiritual *walāyah* embraces that *walāyah* given by Allāh that spurs things to grow. Spiritual *walāyah* also embraces the response to Allāh's growth-inducing *walāyah* that seeks to ignite spiritual growth and development. After cosmological *walāyah*, spiritual *walāyah* is the main topic of the Qurʾān.

The stages of *yaqīn* and *ridwān* correspond to the levels of enlightenment discussed in Eastern mysticism.

The *walāyah* of Allāh that spurs things to grow is *tazkiyah*; the *walāyah* returned by creation that constitutes growth and development in response to *tazkiyah* is *tazakkīyah*. See *TSP*, Principle 23.

Ch

The final science mentioned by the Prophet is the *Established Tradition* (*al-sunnatu al-qā'imah*). The tradition being referred to here is the specific tradition of the Prophet's practice and legislation, collectively called 'the *Sunnah*'. This includes all of the precise details pertaining to ritual practices, as well as legal, civil, social, economic, and political matters. Together these matters constitute what may be called 'legislative *walāyah*'. Legislative *walāyah* embraces that *walāyah* given by Allāh – and the response we return to it – which shows us the way to outwardly adore and serve Him, as well as how to work with ourselves and each other to best establish a personal or collective community of harmony and justice. It is the third in the order of the sciences, and there is a very important reason for that. Although only a small part of the Qur'ān is dedicated to legislative *walāyah*, its importance can in no way be dismissed. Yet, as we will see, it is grounded within and draws its justification from cosmological and spiritual *walāyah*. Inversely, legislative *walāyah* provides the grounding for spiritual *walāyah*, which in turn provides the grounding for cosmological *walāyah*, which is the ultimate goal.

There is no fine, sharp, line dividing these branches of knowledge. The Qur'ān in particular draws no such line: The three *walāyahs* are so interconnected that it is not easy to decouple them. Many branches of knowledge may fit into more than one branch. Medicine belongs to cosmological *walāyah* because its subject matter deals with the internal structure of the human body, which is one of the most important microcosmic signs of Allāh. It is a part of spiritual *walāyah*, because the soundness of the body is so important to cultivating inner development and growth. And it is an important part of legislative *walāyah* for many reasons, because of its fundamental importance to society in general (so having enough doctors is a mandatory requirement of society) and because the execution of certain prescriptions of legislative *walāyah* depend upon one's health (like fasting and pilgrimage). So any *beneficial* science has a place somewhere in the scope of the three sciences.

Together these three sciences embrace the entire field of *walāyah*. Cosmological, spiritual, and legislative *walāyah* fit together as an organic whole. Islām is not reducible to any one of these branches alone but rather embraces all three. If any one of them is neglected, Islām suffers. In addition, the issue of *justice*

pertains to all three branches of *walāyah*. Justice is not merely a legal or ethical ideal, but also a *cosmological* one as well. In the remainder of this work we seek to unfold some essential themes of each of these three aspects of the activity of *walāyah* that constitutes the essence of Islām.

2



THE FIRM SIGN

By the late 19th century, the firm sign had become a common sight in the streets of New York City.

The firm sign was a sign that was placed on the exterior of a building, usually above the entrance, to identify the business. It was often made of metal and painted with the name of the business in large, bold letters. The firm sign was a way for a business to advertise itself and to let the public know where to find it.

The firm sign was also a way for a business to show its status and its wealth. A large, ornate firm sign was a sign of a successful business, while a small, plain firm sign was a sign of a struggling business.

The firm sign was a common sight in the streets of New York City, and it was a way for a business to advertise itself and to let the public know where to find it. The firm sign was also a way for a business to show its status and its wealth. A large, ornate firm sign was a sign of a successful business, while a small, plain firm sign was a sign of a struggling business.

The firm sign was a common sight in the streets of New York City, and it was a way for a business to advertise itself and to let the public know where to find it. The firm sign was also a way for a business to show its status and its wealth. A large, ornate firm sign was a sign of a successful business, while a small, plain firm sign was a sign of a struggling business.

3 Sign & Cognizance

3.1 The aim of the firm sign is cognizance.

OF THE THREE Islāmic sciences, the firm sign, the just duty, and the established *summah*, the science of the firm sign or cosmological *walāyah* is by far the most central to Islām (in the full sense). It is the kernel of the other two sciences; indeed, the primary purpose of the other two is ultimately to provide the path to the firm sign. With respect to the established *sunnah*, this path is commonly called "the *shari'ah*;" with respect to the just duty it is commonly called "the *ḥaqīqah*." Arrival at and full experience of the firm sign itself is commonly called "the *ḥaqīqah*" (the reality).

The science of the firm sign involves a particular kind of knowing, namely *ma'rifah* (cognizance or cognizing). The word '*ma'rifah*' refers to a direct knowledge, recognition and awareness that is more specialized than knowledge in general ('ilm).

The role of *ma'rifah* is so important that it is useful to contrast it with another form of knowledge known as *propositional knowledge*.

Consider a detailed and accurate book on a famous politician, say, Bill Clinton. The book contains many facts but no pictures at all. Now consider that the person reading the book – we'll call him John – has never seen either Bill Clinton or a picture of him. Now John will learn many important facts about Bill Clinton, e.g., that he was the 42nd president of the United States, when he was born, where he went to school, and many other things. Indeed, he may become a certified expert on Bill Clinton. Each fact or true proposition about Bill Clinton that John knows constitutes *propositional knowledge*.

Now suppose that John is walking down the street and Bill Clinton walks right past him. For all his propositional knowledge of the man John will not recognize the real Bill Clinton at all. Despite everything he knows (in the propositional sense), John has no *ma'rifah* or cognizance of Bill Clinton. Put another way, John may know a lot about Bill Clinton but he cannot be said to really know or cognize Bill Clinton. And the degree to which one

Some western languages have a distinction that comes close to the Arabic distinction between general '*ilm*' and '*ma'rifah*'. For example: In French we have '*savoir*' (meaning "to know (in general)"), and '*connaître*' (roughly, "to be directly cognizant of"). It is significant that 'to cognize' comes from the same root as '*connaître*', although 'to cognize' is hardly used in everyday English, whereas '*connaître*' and '*ma'rifah*' are very common in French and Arabic respectively.

really knows or cognizes Bill Clinton is the degree to which one has cognizance and recognition of him.

But how exactly does one recognize Bill Clinton? One immediate way is through those physical features that are unique and particular to him. Those features provide a sign, evidence, or mark that allows one to make a positive identification. In general: *The ma'rifah, cognizing, or cognizance of a given thing constitutes a distinct knowledge and awareness of that thing separate from anything else, generally through the medium of some distinguishing sign, mark, or characteristic.*

We may now state the prime aim or purpose of the science of the firm sign: it is the cognizing (*ma'rifah*) or cognizance of Allāh through His signs. This primary goal of cognizance of Allāh also includes a number of sub-aims which can be categorized into two general areas:

- 1 Cognizance of Allāh with respect to the *origin* and *coming forth* of creation. This area includes problems such as:
 - The Existence of Allāh;
 - The Oneness of Allāh;
 - The essential attributes of Allāh (such as Power and Knowledge);
 - The created or *actional* attributes of Allāh (such as Creating and Providing);
 - The question of Allāh's *Justice* (including issues related to free will and predestination);
 - The *creation* and *purpose* of the World in general and of humanity in particular;
 - The *administration* and *guidance* of the World in general and of humanity in particular, including the roles of *prophecy* and *revelation*;
- 2 Cognizance of Allāh with respect to the *destiny* of creation and its *return* to its origin. This area includes problems such as:

Cognizance is the heart of *din* and *walāyah*.

- Death;
- Resurrection & judgement;
- Paradise and hell.

To summarize: The aim of the science of the firm sign or cosmological *walāyah* is the cognizance of Allāh, cognizance of the origin of creation and humanity through Allāh, and cognizance of the return of creation and humanity to Allāh.

3.2 Cognizance is the heart of *din* and *walāyah*.

The first and primary manifestation of *walāyah* or *dynamic loving* for someone or something is the *ma'rifah* or *cognizance* of that someone or something. This can be illustrated by a common refrain that one comes across in popular culture: when a pair of people (such as lovers or a parent and child) who are supposed to truly love and have *walāyah* for one another develop serious problems to the point of separating from one another, it is not uncommon for an exchange like the following to take place:

A to B: But I love you!

B to A: How can you say you love me when you don't even know me!?

Here is another example:

A to B: But I love you!

B to A: Sorry, but I don't know you anymore!

The *knowing* being referred to by *B* in the above examples is a deep or profound *cognizing*, a *recognition* of the inner being of *B* or *A*. Of course *A* and *B* still know many *facts* about one another (propositional knowledge), but what *B* is claiming or alleging is not an ignorance of *facts*, but rather a lack of real *cognizance*. That cognizance is a prerequisite of true dynamic love or *walāyah*.

So the kernel of any activity of *walāyah* is actually *ma'rifah*. Without *ma'rifah* there can be no question of true *walāyah*. This point has been expressed many times in the *Hadith*, including a

line in one of the most authentic and famous sermons of Imām ‘Alī:

The primary point of the dīn is cognizing [ma‘rifah] Him [Allāh]...

And in one of the most famous traditions quoted in the science of the firm sign, Allāh is reported to have said to the Prophet,

I was a hidden treasure, and I loved that I be cognized. So I created Creation in order that I be cognized.

So according to this tradition, *ma‘rifah* or *cognizance* is not only the essence of positive *walāyah* towards Allāh, it is the very purpose of creation itself!

3.3 ‘*Ubūdiyyah* is positive *walāyah* towards Allāh.

A short but necessary digression is in order here. The general point about *dīn* and *cognizance* is frequently expressed in terms of another very important activity, *‘ibādah*. As we will elaborate further on, the *walāyah* of Allāh is universal, comprehensive, supreme, and final; it is the source of all other *walāyah* whatsoever and no other *walāyah* is independent of it. Thus the positive response to the *walāyah* of Allāh must be unique, comprehensive, and final; it must be ultimately-focused on and directed to Allāh, beyond any other apparent or secondary sources of *walāyah*.

Now let us remind ourselves of something we mentioned in the previous chapter, namely that the *dīn* of Islām involves fundamentally the activity of positive *walāyah* (*dynamic loving*) in response to the *walāyah* of Allāh. This unique, comprehensive, and singularly-focused positive *walāyah* towards Allāh is known as the activity of *‘ubūdiyyah* or *‘ibādah*. The word *‘ubūdiyyah* (or *‘ibādah*) is difficult to translate with a single English word. It carries two basic connotations: “adoration” and “service”. In Islāmic terminology – that is, the vocabulary of the Qur’ān and the Prophet – the combined activity of adoration and service embraces every aspect of positive *walāyah* from creation in general and humanity in particular. That is, every activity in Islām is a form or manifestation of *‘ubūdiyyah*. Put another

‘ibādah is of two kinds: inward and outward.

way, *‘ubūdiyyah* or *‘ibādah* is that positive, singularly- and ultimately-focused *walāyah* that constitutes the *dīn* of Islām.

3.4 *‘ibādah* is of two kinds: inward and outward.

Analogous to the word *‘islām* (as discussed in the previous chapter), the expression *‘ibādah* has two fundamental senses: *inward* and *outward*. In the outward sense it refers to all of the outer activities that Muslims are required to do or recommended to do, especially the ritual acts such as communion and fasting. In the inward sense, however, it refers to the inner spirit that underlies the entire field of ultimately-focused positive *walāyah* in response to the *walāyah* of Allāh. The word *‘ibādah* may also be used to encompass both the outward acts and the inner spirit of those acts. So *‘ibādah* in general embraces both the inward and outward aspects.

An important subtlety is in order here: The expressions *‘ubūdiyyah* and *‘ibādah* are basically synonymous from the point of view of language. However, in the terminology of the Prophet *‘ubūdiyyah* is primarily used to denote the inner spirit of ultimately-focused positive *walāyah*, that is, *‘ibādah* in the inward sense. On the other hand, *‘ibādah* is generally used in the outer sense. So when used together, one can say: *The activity of ‘ibādah (in the outward sense) is the outer shell of ‘ubūdiyyah, and ‘ubūdiyyah is the inner spirit of ‘ibādah.*

The subtle distinction between *‘ubūdiyyah* and *‘ibādah* allows us to make a point in analogy with our earlier observation (Subprinciple 1.2.2) that Islām has an inward, pre-institutional sense. We can say that Islām in the inward, pre-institutional sense is a general case of *‘ubūdiyyah*, and the manifestations of that *‘ubūdiyyah* are a general case of *‘ibādah*. That is, one can have to at least some degree a spirit of *‘ubūdiyyah* and act out *‘ibādah* even if one has not been exposed to Islām as a formal way of life. This is because the dynamic of *walāyah*-given and *walāyah*-returned runs through all things. In the formal sense, of course, Islām claims to be the most favored and complete *dīn* or way of *‘ubūdiyyah* and the Straight Way:

Today I have perfected your din for you, completed my favor to you, and have approved for you Islām as your din. [5:3]

Show us the Straight Way! The way of those whom you have favored, not those who are the subjects of [your] anger, nor those who go astray. [1:7]

Ch

3.5 Rubūbiyyah is walāyah from Allāh.

The above discussion raises the following question: just as the full, ultimate, positive *walāyah* directed towards Allāh has a special name, 'rubūbiyyah' or 'ibādah', does the *walāyah* that flows from Allāh have a special name? The answer is yes; that name is 'rubūbiyyah'. Just as the word 'rubūbiyyah' expresses the twin connotations "adoration" and "service", the word 'rubūbiyyah' expresses the twin connotations "cherishing" and "lordship".

We will discuss in more detail later that the principle of the oneness of Allāh as the supreme source of *walāyah* implies that, in every manner and aspect of its being, every creature depends on Allāh for its creation, its life, its sustenance, and its future development including death and its aftermath. Combined with the foundation of love and cherishing that is the root of *walāyah*, these four are manifestations of the *rubūbiyyah* or *cherishing* and *lordship* of Allāh.

The dynamic, polar relationship of *walāyah* between Allāh and His creation may be generally expressed in terms of *rubūbiyyah* and 'rubūbiyyah' (or 'ibādah'). To illustrate: The kernel of love at the heart of the *walāyah* that Allāh gives to His creation manifests as His *cherishing* of creation. The kernel of love at the heart of the *walāyah* which creation returns in response to the love and cherishing of Allāh manifests as its *adoration* of Allāh. That is, there is a polarity between creator and created in the way love or *walāyah* is manifested: the creator *cherishes* His creation, and creation *adores* its creator.

The polarity between the *walāyah* of Allāh and that of creation has another key aspect. The creating, ordering, and sustaining of creation is the manifestation of the *lordship* of Allāh, whereas the positive response of creation to the lordship of Allāh constitutes its *service* to Allāh. Together, cherishing and lordship constitute

Humanity was created for 'rubūbiyyah.

the *walāyah* of Allāh, or *rubūbiyyah*; adoration and service constitute the *walāyah* of creation, or 'rubūbiyyah.

3.6 Humanity was created for 'rubūbiyyah.

Further on we will discuss the special role of humanity in the creation of Allāh. Yet the entire purpose for creation, according to the Qur'an, is 'rubūbiyyah, that is, fundamental and ultimate positive *walāyah* towards Allāh:

And I did not create jinn or humanity except that they should adore and serve Me. [51:56]

A question now arises. How do we reconcile the following two propositions:

- 1 "The ultimate purpose of creation is the *ma'rifah* of Allāh";
- 2 "The ultimate purpose of creation is the 'rubūbiyyah of Allāh'?"

3.7 Ma'rifah is the heart of 'rubūbiyyah.

We explained earlier that cognizance or *ma'rifah* is a necessary condition of *walāyah*. Since 'rubūbiyyah or 'ibādah is nothing but ultimately-focused positive *walāyah* on the part of creation, it must also be rooted in the cognizance of the *object* of that *walāyah*, namely Allāh.

The central role of cognizance in Islām is quite often expressed in terms of 'ibādah and 'rubūbiyyah. The following *hadith* is from Abu Ja'far Muḥammad al-Baqir:

Only one who cognizes Allāh [ma'rifah] can adore and serve Allāh ['rubūbiyyah].

In another sermon Imām 'Ali says,

The primary point of the 'ibādah of Allāh is cognizing Him.

And Abū Dharr reports that the Prophet said to him,

The *jinn* are a class of spiritual beings with freedom of choice, normally invisible to humans. See Principle 5.2.

See the previous chapter (Subprinciple 1.3.1) for the discussion of the polar nature of *walāyah*.

Compare this *hadith* to the earlier one: The primary point of the *din* is cognizing Him. Basically, the *din* of Islām and 'ibādah are one and the same. Thus Islām is nothing but the *din* of 'ibādah, of ultimately-focused *walāyah*.

O Abū 'Dharr!... Know that the primary point of the 'ibādah of Allāh is cognizing Him. It is the primary point before everything else, and nothing else [in 'ibādah] is before it. It is also a solitary point such that nothing [in 'ibādah] is [independently] secondary to it. And it is the remaining point which has no final limit.

Ch

Abū Dharr was an early and close companion of the Prophet. Ibn 'Abbās was a first cousin and later companion of the Prophet. Despite his relative youth, he was one of the most knowledgeable of the Companions. In a future augmentation to this work, we plan to say more about these important historical figures.

That is, nothing is more essential to 'ibādah, nothing is more central to ultimately-focused positive walāyah, than the *ma'rifah* or cognizance of Allāh. The expression, 'It is also a unique point such that nothing [in 'ibādah] is [independently] secondary to it', means that there is no type of 'ibādah whatsoever that does not flow directly from cognizance itself. No kind of 'ibādah – whether it is communion, fasting, or pilgrimage to Mecca – is independent of cognizance so as to even be secondary to it. It is the solitary root of all 'ibādah and, hence, the solitary root of all walāyah directed towards Allāh. Finally, the highest stages of 'ibādah are stages of pure *ma'rifah*, and the cognizance of Allāh has no limit. *Ma'rifah* or cognizance is thus the first, central, and ultimate act of returning walāyah to Allāh.

Ibn 'Abbās reports,

An Arab from the desert came to the Prophet and asked, "O Messenger of Allāh, teach me from the deeper mysteries of knowledge!" The Prophet replied, *'What have you accomplished with regards to the peak of knowledge so as to ask about its deeper mysteries? So the man asked, "What is the peak of knowledge, O Messenger of Allāh?" The Prophet replied, Cognizance of Allāh, a cognizance deserving of Him.*

3.8 Cognizance of Allāh is cognizance of His signs.

It is clear that the fundamental aim and purpose of the science of the firm sign is *ma'rifah* or cognizance of Allāh. Yet the object of the science of the firm sign is, interestingly, not Allāh Himself but rather the signs of Allāh. That is, cognizance of Allāh takes place through cognizance of His signs.

Remember the example from the last chapter of the red stop sign at the corner of Bush and Clinton. When one recognizes

Cognizance of Allāh is cognizance of His signs.

that stop sign, one obtains firm and unambiguous cognizance of the law that states that every motorized vehicle must come to a complete stop at that intersection. Given a sign, when it is recognized as firm, then one has immediate cognizance of that which it signifies.

Now when one studies for the written part of a driver's exam, one does *not* study the particular traffic laws governing every single road or traffic intersection. Those laws are not the object of, say, the "science of driving rules." Rather, the object of the science of driving rules consists of signs. There are green, yellow, and red lights; red octagonal stop signs, yellow diamond yield signs, and orange construction signs; there are even hand signs (in case of broken turn signals). These are among the many signs that one learns to recognize, that one learns to have *ma'rifah* of, in order to become qualified to drive.

Yet no traffic symbol is an aim or goal in and of itself. Rather each traffic symbol is a sign of something much more important, namely, the law governing the particular road pattern present at the location of the sign. No one can possibly directly know the particular law or laws governing every single road and intersection. But through cognizance of a given traffic sign at a particular location, one gains immediate cognizance of the law that that sign signifies.

Similarly, the object of the science of the firm sign consists of the signs of Allāh; upon firm and unambiguous cognizance of the sign one obtains firm and unambiguous cognizance of Allāh, of the origin of creation through Allāh, and of the return of creation to Allāh.

In the Qur'ān Allāh says,

Say, "Praise belongs to Allāh; He will show you His signs so that you may cognize them. [27:93]

'We will show them our signs in the horizons and in their selves until it becomes clear to them that He is the Real. [41:53]

The Qur'ān points out (as we shall discuss further on) that Allāh per se cannot be seen by human eyes or any other created implements of perception. Yet through the firm signs, the reality

of Allāh becomes clearer than that of anything else. That is, Allāh *appears* or *manifests* to the cognizant through the firm signs.

3.9 *There are various words for sign.*

Ch

The most general and frequent word for sign in the Qurʾān is 'āyah' (plural āyāt). As we mentioned in the last chapter, an āyah or sign is something that stands in relation to something else such that, if one obtains cognizance of the sign, one immediately obtains cognizance of that something else. That which is signified by the word 'āyah' is often not directly perceptible. So cognizance of a sign of Allāh imparts cognizance of Allāh, though Allāh himself is not directly visible.

Although the word 'āyah' is the most frequent expression, the Qurʾān and Hadith also use other words, each of which denotes a sign from a more particular aspect of its relation to that which it signifies. Following are a few of them:

- *Mathal*, (plural, *amthāl*, 'th' pronounced as in 'three')

A *mathal* is a sign that provides a likeness, example, or illustration of something in a way so as to induce cognizance or enlightenment about that something. One translation for 'mathal' is 'similitude', whose senses include "imaginative comparison" and "correspondence in kind or quality". In many contexts the word 'symbol' provides an appropriate translation.

After 'āyah', the word 'mathal' is one of the most frequently used expressions for sign in the Qurʾān. The following is a typical example:

The similitude (mathal) of those who take comforters in lieu of Allāh is the similitude of the spider; she builds a house for herself. And surely the flimsiest of houses is the spider's house. If they only knew!

'Comforters' translates the Arabic 'awliya', the plural of 'waliyy', meaning "provider of mālāyah".

There are various words for sign.

...And these are the symbols (amthāl) we draw for them; no one is conscious of them except the knowers.
[29:41, 43]

- *Athar* (plural, *āthār*)

An *athar* is an imprint of the activity of the signified. We will translate 'athar' with just 'imprint'. Consider the following āyah:

Observe and contemplate the imprints of the Mercy of Allāh, how He gives life to the earth after its death. The same will give life to the dead [30:50]

He gives life to the earth after its death: This is a reference to the renewal of life in the spring that follows the death of winter.

Note the precision of the expression 'the imprints of the Mercy of Allāh'. The *imprints* are associated directly with, not the Essence of Allāh, but rather Allāh's Activity, in particular His Mercy, about which Allāh says,

...and My Mercy encompasses each and every thing.
[7:156]

Thus the expression 'imprints of Allāh' is elliptical for 'imprints of the activity of Allāh'. As we shall see later (Subprinciple 4.3.5), Islāmic cosmology draws a metaphysical distinction between the Essence of Allāh per se and the Actions of Allāh.

The expression 'athar' is perhaps used most often in the supplications and sermons of the Family of the Prophet. For example: In the course of a famous sermon known as the *Sermon of 'Phantoms* Imām 'Alī says,

*He [Allāh] made us see,
from the dominion of His power;
from the wonders of which the imprints (āthār) of His wisdom speak;
and from the recognition of the need of creation that
He hold it up through His strength
that which indicates the difficulty in establishing a proof
against cognizing (ma'rifah) Him. So appeared the creations which the imprints (āthār) of His artistry and the*

markers of His Wisdom originated. So every creation became a proof of Him and a guide to Him.



Ch

The word 'athar' allows us to give a precise definition of the concept "ma'rifah or cognizance of Allāh". According to the lexicographers, the word 'ma'rifah' means "the grasping of a thing through reflective meditation and contemplation of its imprint (athar)". As we have explained above, the imprint of a thing is actually the imprint of its activity. In the case of Allāh that activity constitutes the *Mercy of Allāh*. As we will explain later (see the discussion beginning on page 129), the word 'Mercy' is a comprehensive word used to mention the walāyah of Allāh that envelops all things.

Based on the above we can provide the following definition: *The ma'rifah or cognizance of Allāh is the grasping of Allāh through reflective meditation and contemplation upon the imprints of His walāyah and rubūbiyyah. We may also define the concept "āyah" or "sign of Allāh" in terms of the concept "athar" ("imprint"): A sign of Allāh is an imprint of the walāyah and rubūbiyyah of Allāh.*

- *Dhikr* ('dh' pronounced as 'th' in 'this')

A *dhikr* is a kind of call to presence that points to or reminds one of the immediate presence of something else, namely Allāh. This relates to the point of the Qur'ān that humanity in its origin actually has cognizance of Allāh but has in some sense forgotten this (See *TSP*, Principle 1.5). The word '*dhikr*' is usually translated by an expression like 'reminder' or 'remembrance', but the connotation 'presence' is at the root of its meaning. Occasionally it is even appropriate to translate '*dhikr*' by just 'presence'.

As a kind of sign, the Qur'ān frequently uses the word '*dhikr*' to denote the revelation or the one who brings it. In general, however, a *dhikr* (reminder, call to presence, or just presence) is a sign that induces cognizance of the immediate presence of Allāh:

If the Real followed their desires the heavens and the earth and whoever is therein would become corrupted. But we have given them their reminder/presence and yet from their reminder/presence do they turn away.
[23:71]

That is, we have reminded them of or called to presence that by means of which they will be cognizant of the presence of Allāh.

- *Ism* (plural, *asmā'*)

The word '*ism*' literally means "name". A name is a sign by means of which one addresses or otherwise refers to the signified. In the case of Allāh, His names are called "the most beautiful names" ("*al-asmā' al-husnā*"):

Say [O Prophet]: Call out to Allāh, or call out to Al-Rahmān; however you call out to him, He has the most beautiful names. [17:110]

The names of Allāh constitute one of the most important topics in the science of the firm sign. We will say more about them further on.

So what exactly are these signs? To whom are they addressed? How does one obtain cognizance of them? It is these questions which we will now address.

3.10 There are four classes of sign

The signs mentioned in the Qur'ān and Hadith may be classified into four categories; macrocosm, microcosm, revelation, and the tradition (example and guidance) of the Prophet. Let us briefly discuss each of these kinds of sign:

1 Macrocosm

By the expression 'macrocosm' we mean the cosmos or universe that exists outside of the individual. The Qur'ān uses the word 'horizons' to denote the macrocosm:

The name 'Al-Rahmān' is a proper name of God like 'Al-lāh'. It basically means "The Universally Merciful". All of Allāh's names are used as adjectives on one occasion or other in the Qur'ān, but 'Allāh' and 'Al-Rahmān' are used more specifically as proper names. See Principle 4.1 below (see also *TSP*, Principle 2.6).

There is another, closely related meaning of the word '*dhikr*' that we will discuss in the sequel to this work (*TSP*, page 151).

'We will show them our signs in the horizons and in their selves until it becomes clear to them that He is the Real. [41:53]

So we delivered him [Noah] and those with him in the laden ark; then we drowned the rest. Surely in this is a sign: and yet most of them do not have dynamic belief. [26:119-121]

Ch

The signs of the macrocosm cover the entire gamut of human experience in the outer world, including the creation and flow of nature and the natural world, history, and the amazing apparent interruptions in the flow of nature commonly called "miracles." Let us give a very small sample of examples from the Qur'ān:

- Nature

Surely in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of night and day, are signs for those possessing the kernels of consciousness. [3:190]

And from the fruit of the date-palm and the grape-vine you take drink and a wholesome providence. Surely in that are signs for a people who have consciousness. And your Cherisher and Lord inspired the 'Bee: "Build habitats in the hills, the trees, and where [people] settle. Then eat of each of the fruits [of the land], and thereby be led to follow the ways of your Cherisher and Lord." Then comes forth from their bellies a drink of varying colors, within which is healing for mankind. Surely in that are signs for a people who reflectively meditate. [16:67-69]

And among His signs: He shows you lightning, both by way of fear and hope And sends down water from the sky and thereby gives life to the land after its death. Surely in that are signs for a people who have consciousness. [30:24]

- History

Surely in Joseph and his brethren are signs for the questioners. [12:7]

- Miracles (and other special signs)

In general, miracles are among those signs which are *distinguishing* or *clear* (*bayyin*). Upon encountering a distinguishing or clear sign cognizance is virtually immediate. Not every clear sign is a miracle, however. The Qur'ān actually does not have a single word that corresponds to our word 'miracle'. There is no sharp line to be drawn between so-called "miracles" and other signs, except perhaps that "miracles" are more immediately obvious. For one with deep cognizance, however, every sign is clear and distinguishing, and any distinction between an apparent miracle and a normal event disappears completely.

It is not for any messenger to bring forth a sign [such as a miracle] except with the permission of Allāh. [40:78]

Then when Moses came to them [the people of Pharaoh] with Our clear signs they said, "This is nothing but forged magic!" [28:36]

And 'We gave Jesus the son of Mary clear signs, and we aided him with the Spirit of Holiness. [2:253]

- 2 Microcosm

By the expression 'microcosm' we mean the cosmos or universe that exists *within* a given individual. The Qur'ān uses the word 'self' (from the Arabic 'nafs') to denote the microcosm:

'We will show them our signs in the horizons and in their selves until it becomes clear to them that He is the Real. [41:53]

And in the earth are signs for those who are dynamically certain. And in your selves; will you not then look and see?!? [51:21]

The expression 'fear' refers to the dangers lightning may bring, such as fire or damage; 'hope' refers to rain that may accompany it.

The signs of the microcosm encompass the entire inner life of the individual, from creation to anatomy and psychology. For example:

And among His signs is that He created you from dust; then lo! you are humans, scattering yourselves [across the land]. And among his signs is that he created for you mates from yourselves in whom you may find repose, and he placed love and mercy between you. Surely in that are signs for a people who reflectively meditate. [30:20-21]

The importance in Islām of the self (*nafs*) as a sign cannot be overestimated. One of the most famous traditions narrated by Imām ‘Alī says,

‘Whoever has cognized his self thereby has cognized of his ‘Lord.

Another tradition of the Prophet states,

‘Whoever is most cognizant of his self is the most cognizant of his ‘Lord.

Later in this work (Chapter 7) we will discuss self-cognizance and its importance in more detail.

3 Revelation

Of course the Qur’ān itself is a major sign in Islām. Indeed, the Qur’ān is the most visible sign that Islām as a distinct *dīn* offers to the world. Part of the importance attached to the Qur’ān as a sign can be seen in the fact that each subdivision of the 114 main divisions or chapters of the book is called an “*āyah*.” Normally in English the Qur’ān is spoken of as containing so-called “verses”; however they are actually not verses but *signs*. That is, each subdivision of the Qur’ān is considered to be a sign that can lead to cognizance of Allāh, the origin of creation, or its destiny.

Here we will only give some examples of the Qur’ān referring to itself as a sign or set of signs:

There are four classes of sign.

He [Allāh] is the one who sent down to you [O Prophet] the ‘Book [i.e., the Qur’ān]: in it are firm signs. [3:7]

‘Tā Sīn. These are the signs of the Qur’ān; a ‘Book that makes [things] clear. [27:1]

The Qur’ān also considers earlier revelations and scriptures to be signs, even if it considers those revelations to be corrupted or abrogated:

They are not all the same: from the people of the [earlier] scripture are a standing community who rehearse the signs of Allāh throughout the night, prostrating themselves. [3:113]

As indicated earlier, the Qur’ān refers to itself as a *dhikr*, a reminding presence that signifies a greater presence:

That is what ‘We rehearse to you [O Prophet] of the Signs and the ‘Wise Reminding ‘Presence (‘Dhikr). [3:58]

4 Tradition

The Prophet and his *sunnah* or tradition constitute the remaining class of signs. Like the Qur’ān, the Prophet is referred to as a presence or reminder:

Surely Allāh has sent down to you a reminding presence: A messenger who rehearses to you the signs of Allāh which make things clear; in order that he may bring out those who have dynamic belief and do righteous deeds from degrees of darkness into the light. [65:11]

And those who cover [the truth] would try to trip you up with their eyes when they hear the Reminding Presence and they say, “Surely he is insane!” And he is actually nothing less than a reminding presence for all the worlds! [68:51-52]

Tā Sīn: These are two of fourteen letters of the Arabic alphabet that play a mystical role in the Qur’ān. Certain *sūrah*s begin with a subset of these fourteen letters. The people of the [earlier] scripture are at least the Christians and Jews.

A much more detailed and lengthy discussion of the stations and process of self-cognizance is to be found in TSP, the sequel to this work.

Everything which the Prophet brings is also a sign and example for humanity:

He is the one who sends clear signs to His adorer and servant, so that He may bring you out of degrees of darkness into the light. [57:9]

That which the Messenger brings, take it! [59:7]

3.11 Silence is the first step towards cognizance.

We have seen that, according to Islām, everything in general and humanity in particular is created for the purpose of focused responding to the *walāyah* of Allāh, that is, for *‘ibādah*. And the essence of *‘ibādah* is cognizance or *ma‘rifah* of the signs. Now there arises a very practical question: how is cognizance of the signs supposed to be achieved?

Usually when the Qur’ān mentions a sign or signs, it does one of two things:

- 1 It may mention a class of people to whom the sign(s) is (are) directly addressed, with the implication that that class of people will likely or certainly cognize the sign(s). For example:

Surely in that are signs for a people who reflectively meditate. [e.g., 30:21]

That is, those who are capable of and engage in reflective meditation will be able to cognize the sign and obtain cognizance of that which it signifies;

- 2 It may mention a class of people to whom the sign(s) is (are) directly addressed, yet imply that that class of people may only cognize the sign(s) if they do something else. For example:

Those are the symbols we draw for humanity; maybe they will reflectively meditate. [59:21]

So in the first case, a *people who reflectively meditate* will likely, maybe certainly, cognize the sign and the signified. However, people in general (i.e., *humanity*) may only grasp the sign and

Silence is the first step towards cognizance:

the signified if they engage in reflective meditation. From these two examples we learn that the cognizance of signs is closely related to the activity of *reflective meditation (tafakkur)*.

There are over a dozen activities which the Qur’ān associates with the cognizing of signs. It would take us far afield to cover each of them in detail. However, two of these activities are most general, and in some way embrace or manifest in each of the others. These are *‘aql* (consciousness) and *tafakkur* (reflective meditation). We have actually already encountered the English translations of these two terms in selections from the Qur’ān quoted earlier. Underlying reflective meditation is a third activity, *silence*. Let us discuss each of these in turn:

1 *‘Aql* (Consciousness)

The word “*‘aql*” as used in the Qur’ān and the traditions of the Prophet has no exact equivalent in English. The root verb literally means “to bind together”. In English sometimes we say, “he’s got it together,” for someone who has got his sense and wits about him. We may also say, “He’s become unhinged,” or, “he’s just not together,” for someone who has lost his sense or wits. To have *‘aql* is, in some sense, to “have it together.” The root verb also means “to restrain or withhold”. What *‘aql* restrains one from is ignorance, ignorant behavior, or anything unsuitable to one’s well-being.

In later Arabic usage *‘aql* became equivalent to *intellect* or *reason*, but this constitutes a major constriction of its usage in the Qur’ān and the traditions. Rather, in the Qur’ān and traditions the term “*‘aql*” expresses something like “consciousness”, and in particular connotes “consciousness as the exercise of which binds one to *walāyah*”. The following tradition is relevant: Someone asked Imām Šādiq, “What is *‘aql*?” He replied,

*That through which Al-Rahmān is adored and served,
and through which the gardens [of Paradise] are earned.*

That is, *‘aql* is that through which *‘ibādah*, that singularly-focused *walāyah* towards Allāh, is performed. Whatever one earns in the life to come is a function of the exercise of one’s *‘aql*. *‘Aql* thus “binds” one to *walāyah*.

Imām Ṣādiq reports that the Prophet said to his cousin and son-in-law ‘Alī,

O ‘Alī! No poverty is worse than ignorance, and no wealth is more beneficial than consciousness.

Imām Ṣādiq also reports the following from the Prophet:

When you are informed about a man with [apparently] excellent qualities then observe the excellence of his consciousness, for he is recompensed only in accordance with his consciousness.

The last tradition makes a pointed distinction between mere formal acts and the consciousness that goes into them. There is a big difference between a person who imitates good deeds and one who does them out of consciousness and understanding. For example: If a man gives charity conscious of the *walāyah* or *rubūbiyyah* of Allāh, then his recompense is quite different from one who gives charity merely to impress others. The first acts with ‘*aqī*’; the second acts in ignorance. Indeed ignorance (*jahl*) in this sense is the opposite of *consciousness* (‘*aqī*’). Another tradition reported from the Prophet states,

Don’t be overly impressed with someone who does a lot of communion and fasting until you observe his consciousness.

Communion and fasting are the most common acts of ritual ‘*ibādah*’ among Muslims, and are thus symbolic of ritual ‘*ibādah*’ in general. The Prophet’s point is thus that the value of the more external and formal acts of ‘*ibādah*’ is a function of the consciousness that underlies them. Mere blind repetition or imitation without consciousness is of little value.

The Qur’ān places great emphasis on ‘*aqī*’ or consciousness. For example:

The alternation of night and day; and that sustenance [water] which Allāh sends down from the sky – and thereby gives life to the earth after its death – and the

Silence is the first step towards cognizance:

variations in the winds are signs for a people that exercise consciousness. [45:5]

Those are the symbols we draw forth for humanity, but none exercises consciousness of them except the knowers. [29:43]

Do you command the people to righteousness and forget your own selves, while narrating Scripture? Will you not exercise consciousness [i.e., do you have no sense]? [2:44]

We have surely sent down to you all a book, within it is a presence for you; will you not exercise consciousness? [21:10]

The Qur’ān is actually full of exhortations to consciousness; every mode of contemplation, meditation, and perception flows from it. The eyes are an organ of consciousness through the faculty of sight; the ears are an organ of consciousness through the faculty of hearing. But in the cosmology of the Qur’ān the central and prime organ of consciousness is identified with the heart (or *qalb*).

Although today this usage is virtually obsolete, even in English one meaning of the word ‘heart’ is “faculty of the intellect” or “faculty of consciousness”. Today one normally considers both consciousness and intellect as primarily brain functions;⁶ yet in previous centuries it was much more common to consider consciousness or even the faculty of the intellect as being closely related to the heart. We are not speaking of the conical muscle in the chest *per se*; rather, the bodily heart is a manifestation of or gateway to the actual heart or seat of intelligence, which is something non-corporeal.

Even today we have remnants of this earlier usage: we speak of someone with a “warm heart” or a “cold heart.” Also, the consciousness of a person is normally considered to be the “essence” of a person’s individuality. So when you refer to yourself you point at, not your brain, but your heart, the seat of consciousness.

Concerning the heart and consciousness the Qur’ān says,

⁶ Interestingly, recent scientists have reported that the heart actually has its own neural center or “brain.”

The exact relation in early, primordial Islamic cosmology between the heart, the brain, and consciousness is somewhat difficult to determine precisely. A careful study of the early sources indicates that, while the heart is the home (*maskan*) of consciousness, the brain is its place of application (*maṣwif*). That is, consciousness lives in the heart and is manifested through the brain. So intellection and thought are manifestations of consciousness that take place (from the root of ‘*maṣwif*’) in the brain; while cognition, resolution (*ḥazm*) and sensitivity are rooted in the heart. Furthermore, the place of prostration (*maṣḥūṭ*) *al-sajdah* above and between the eyes is the gate of consciousness where one focuses during *salāh* or communion. In *tafakkur*, then, the heart and brain engage in communion with one another and in communion with the signs of the macrocosm and microcosm, the Qur’ān and the traditions. This is an area where more research is needed.

Do they not travel in the earth, so that their hearts be such that they may exercise consciousness with them, or their ears be such that they may hear with them? Surely it is not the eyes which are blind, but rather it is the hearts in their breasts which are blind. [22:46]

And when speaking to one of his students Imām Šādiq said,

O Hishām! Allāh says in His 'Book, Surely in that is a reminder for anyone who has a heart. [50:37], that is, [who has] consciousness.

There is no organ or faculty that the Qur'ān addresses as it does the heart. Indeed, the Qur'ān was revealed to the heart of the Prophet:

The Trusted Spirit brought it down to your heart. [26:194]

The Qur'ān places the heart before other faculties such as sight and hearing:

They have hearts but understand nothing with them; they have eyes but do not see with them; and they have ears but do not hear with them. [7:179]

It is through the heart or *ʿaql* that the other faculties realize their function:

...If we so wished, We could smite them on account of their sins, and seal their hearts so that they could not hear. [7:100]

The above *āyah* is not saying that the faculty of hearing will be taken away so that they become physically deaf, but rather that their faculty of hearing will become of no use in understanding or in exercising their consciousness. That is, their hearing will not be able to help them reflect, meditate, or contemplate, and they will be unable to benefit from those activities of their consciousness.

Silence is the first step towards cognizance.

Finally, it is to the heart, or *ʿaql* – to that consciousness that binds one to Divine *Walāyah* –, that the Qur'ān speaks first and foremost:

Will they not contemplate the Recital (Qur'ān)? or are there chains on their hearts? [47:24]

Thus contemplation, which is an exercise of consciousness, is a function of the heart. In general, the exercising of consciousness through the heart takes on a number of forms, the most important of which is *reflective meditation*.

2 Tafakkur (Reflective Meditation)

Given *ʿaql* or consciousness, it must be exercised or applied. The fundamental application of *ʿaql* in Islām is *tafakkur* (reflective meditation). One literal meaning of *tafakkur* is the movement of the heart to observe and consider the significance of something. In part it also connotes a certain *openness* and *receptivity* to whatever is under observation, free of preconceived notions and dogmas.

Remember that the activity of *walāyah* on the part of creation is primarily a response to the divine *walāyah* of Allāh. That is, *ʿubūdiyyah* (adoration and service) is the response to *ʿubūdiyyah* (cherishing and lordship). The foundation for true *ʿubūdiyyah* or *ʿibādah* on the part of creation is the process of *tafakkur* or reflective meditation.

Imām ʿAlī has said in the course of a testament to his son Hasan,

There is no ʿibādah like reflective meditation upon the artistry of Allāh.

According to a *ḥadīth* narrated by ʿAlī ibn Mūsā al-Ridā,

[Real] ʿibādah is not a lot of [formal] communion and fasting. Indeed, ʿibādah is really reflective meditation in the affair⁶ of Allāh.

⁶ The word 'affair' translates the Arabic 'amr'. This word has two fundamental meanings as used in the Qur'ān: "command"; and "affair" or "matter". I am discussing only the second sense here.

By the expression 'affair of Allāh' is meant those actions of Allāh that constitute the exercise of *rubābiyyah* or divine *walāyah*, as well as the outcomes of those activities. The Qur'ān states,

To Him is the affair returned, all of it. So adore and serve Him. [11:123]

That is: He embraces all *walāyah*, so direct all of your *walāyah* ultimately towards Him.

Returning to *tafakkur* and reflective meditation, the Qur'ān stresses its fundamental and primary importance as follows:

Say [O Prophet]: I only exhort you to one thing: that you stand for Allāh – in pairs of two or alone – and moreover that you reflectively meditate! [34:46]

Here the essence of the message of the Prophet has been expressed in terms of two activities: *standing for Allāh*, and *reflective meditation*. All of Islām in the full sense flows from these two. And since *ibādah*, which includes standing for Allāh, depends upon cognizance, which depends upon reflective meditation, then we can say that reflective meditation is at the essence of the exhortation and standing for Allāh is its key manifestation.

Let us give two more examples from the Qur'ān of the application of reflective meditation to the cognizance of signs, in the macrocosm and the microcosm:

And He is the one who spread out the earth, and made therein mountain peaks and rivers; from every kind of fruit he has created pairs of two; He draws the night over the day. In that are signs for a people who reflectively meditate. [13:3]

'Will they not reflectively meditate upon their own selves? He did not create the heavens and the earth and that which is between them except in truth and to a determined end. Yet many people still reject the Meeting with their Cherisher and Lord. [30:8]

Silence is the first step towards cognizance.

As we indicated above, the *'aql* (consciousness) is exercised through *tafakkur*. Put another way, reflective meditation is what operationalizes or "gives life" to the consciousness; it puts consciousness into action. According to The Prophet of Islām,

Reflection is the life of the visionary heart, just as a walker walks through the darkness by a light.

So reflective meditation is the "light" of the heart or consciousness. Without reflective meditation the heart "walks through the darkness" with no correct direction.

Finally, even ritual *ibādah* like communion and fasting is virtually empty without reflective meditation. Imām 'Alī says,

...Indeed! There is no good to be found in recitation [of the Qur'ān] without meditation. Indeed! There is no good to be found in any [ritual] ibādah that does not contain reflective meditation.

3 Silence

One may ask the question: how does one begin to meditate? According to the Prophet, all *ibādah* begins with one very important thing: *silence* (*samt*). That is, all *walāyah* directed ultimately towards Allāh begins with silence. Now the word we have translated as 'silence' means much more than merely holding one's tongue. Rather, it refers to an inner quietude and stillness that involves disengaging as much as possible from the distractions, preoccupations, and anxieties of the world.

Imām 'Alī narrates in the following tradition that, in the course of a long discourse between Allāh and the Prophet, Allāh communicated to him that

'The beginning of ibādah is silence.

Imām Ṣādiq has connected this point to the issue of cognizance in the course of a lecture he gave to Hishām ibn al-Hakam, one of his most important students:

O Hishām! Allāh made consciousness a guide to cognizance of Him...O Hishām! Everything has a guide: the

We discussed in a previous chapter (2.6.2) that *standing for Allāh* is equivalent to *standing for justice*, and that *standing for justice* depends on knowledge. Cognizance of the firm sign constitutes the foundation for knowledge in Islām. And reflective meditation is the process that leads to cognizance. More deeply, *'standing for Allāh'* refers to the struggle to establish harmony with *walāyah* within oneself and between creation.

guide of consciousness is reflective meditation, and the guide of reflective meditation is silence.

This last tradition ties together most of the earlier discussion. As we have learned, the root of the *din* of Islam in the full sense is cognizance of Allāh. The entirety of Allāh-focused *walāyah* or *‘ibādah* flows from cognizance alone. The process of attaining cognizance is built upon exercising one's consciousness through reflective meditation. The immediate catalyst to reflective meditation is silence. By extension, silence is the catalyst to *‘ibādah* or *‘ubūdiyyah*. That is, *silence is the catalyst to the entire field of response to rubūbiyyah or divine walāyah*. This last point is captured in the following tradition narrated by Imām Ṣādiq:

Allāh is not adored and served by anything more worthy than silence.

That is, there is no better catalyst to the activity of *walāyah* on the part of creation than silence. There is no more effective way of responding to the *rubūbiyyah* of Allāh, to the Divine *Walāyah*, than silence.

Indeed, the tradition of the Prophet narrated by Imām ‘Ali, the beginning of *‘ibādah* is silence, appears to suggest that the very first required act of *walāyah* towards Allāh is silence, and that there is no obligation that precedes the obligation of silence. Silence comes before communion and fasting, before any moral obligations, and even before the acknowledgement of Allāh, for reflective meditation and consciousness is the prerequisite of all of them, and silence is the prerequisite of reflective meditation and the exercise of consciousness.

We may summarize much of the above discussion in relationships as illustrated in the following formulas. The arrow ‘ \Rightarrow ’ means “leads to”; ‘ \equiv ’ means “equivalent to”:

1 Cognizance and ‘Ubūdiyyah

- Cognizance of the Signs \Rightarrow Cognizance of Allāh
- Cognizance of Allāh \Rightarrow ‘Ubūdiyyah

Silence is the first step towards cognizance:

2 ‘Ubūdiyyah, Rubūbiyyah, and ‘Walāyah

- ‘Ubūdiyyah \equiv ‘Walāyah from creation that is ultimately-focused towards Allāh
- ‘Ubūdiyyah \equiv Field of Response to Rubūbiyyah
- Rubūbiyyah \equiv Divine ‘Walāyah
- ‘Ubūdiyyah \equiv Field of Response to Divine ‘Walāyah
- ‘Ubūdiyyah \equiv ‘Din
- ‘Din \equiv Field of Response to Divine ‘Walāyah

3 From Silence to ‘Walāyah and ‘Din

- Silence \Rightarrow Reflection \Rightarrow Consciousness \Rightarrow Cognizance
- Silence \Rightarrow ‘Ubūdiyyah
- Silence \Rightarrow Field of Response to Divine ‘Walāyah
- Silence \Rightarrow ‘Din

There are those who, through continued and consistent practice, are able to continually operationalize the combination of silence, reflective meditation, and consciousness. These three together form the *kernel of consciousness (lubb)*, and those who continually operationalize these three are *those who have kernels of consciousness (ulū āl-albāb)*.

Imām ‘Ali explains this in the course of a sermon:

‘Be aware of Allāh, the awareness of someone with a kernel of consciousness: his heart is always busy in reflective meditation.

That is, one who has a kernel of consciousness is one whose consciousness is always being exercised through reflective meditation. No matter what that person may be doing outwardly, at no

Later (TSP, page 174) we will give the definitive description, provided by Imām Ṣādiq, of those who have kernels of consciousness.

time is his or her consciousness not involved in inner silence and reflective meditation on the signs of Allāh:

Ch 3

Surely in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of night and day, are indeed signs for those who have kernels of consciousness; who are aware of the presence of Allāh standing, sitting, and while lying upon their sides, reflectively meditating upon the creation of the heavens and the earth: "Our Cherisher and Lord! You did not create this in vain!" [3:190]



Finally, the Qurʾān and traditions mention a number of forms of *tafakkur* (reflective meditation) like *contemplation* (*tadabbur*). Some of these forms of reflective meditation are unique to those who have "kernels of consciousness" such as *recollecting* or *calling to presence* (*tadhakkur*). The word '*tadhakkur*' is particularly difficult to translate: From the same root as '*dhikr*', it denotes a kind of reflective meditation such that the one reflectively meditating upon a given thing encounters, in some sense, the very presence of the thing or that which that thing signifies. The word '*recollecting*' as we normally use it denotes perhaps a low level of *tadhakkur*.

Say: Are they equal, those who know and those who do not know? Only those with the kernels of consciousness call into presence [what is signified by this]. [39:9]

A blessed book: we have sent it down to you in order that they may meditate its signs, and so that those with the kernels of consciousness may call into presence [that which the signs signify]. [38:29]



4 Allāh & His Attributes

4.1 There is an ultimate source of Walāyah.

AFTER SILENTLY DISENGAGING (even a little) from the distractions, preoccupations, and anxieties of the world; thus opening (even a crack) the gate of consciousness; then after the projection of consciousness into

- reflective meditation upon the imprints and majesty of the macrocosm; and/or
- contemplation of the symbols and beauty of the microcosm; and/or
- calling to presence the signs, phases and cycles of the Qurʾān; and/or
- meditating upon the traditions of the Prophet of Islām;

then entrance into the tower of *maʿrifah* and cognizance is obtained. And upon entry into the tower of *maʿrifah* the first step on the stairs to the top of that tower is the acknowledgement and recognition that there is a being that is the ultimate source of all existence and becoming.

Many have at least placed a foot on that first stair: Plato called this source "the Form of the Good;" Aristotle called it "the Unmoved Mover," Chuang Tzū called it "the Real Ruler." Abraham called it "my Cherisher and Lord." The Qurʾān properly calls it "Allāh" and "Al-Rahmān."

Some (like Plato and Aristotle) reached the first stair of cognizance of Allāh through the signs of rational consciousness and intellection. Others (like Chuang Tzū) reached this stair through the signs of mystical consciousness. One (in all likelihood unlettered) old lady reached this stair simply by noticing the operation of her water-wheel, a microcosm of the whole universe; "When I move it, the wheel moves; when I stop, the wheel stops." Upon

hearing this Imām ‘Alī is reported to have said, “Your *din* should be that of these old ladies.”

In conjunction with silent reflective meditation upon the signs, symbols, imprints, majesty, and beauty of the macrocosm and microcosm, the Qur’ān, particularly when read in the original Arabic, seeks to produce an awe in the heart that opens the door to the tower of *ma‘rifah* as well as a guide to the pinnacle of that tower:

And in the earth are signs for those who exercise dynamic certainty;

And within yourselves; Will you not look and see?
[51:21]

And in the sky is your sustenance and what you have been promised.

So by the Cherisher and Lord of sky and earth He is surely Real; as surely as you can even communicate!
[51:20–23]

From this primordial insight that is common to the various spiritual and intellectual heritages of mankind, the Qur’ān and traditions develop what Islām considers to be the most precise, accurate, and comprehensive understanding of Who Allāh Is. The fundamental principle is that all *walāyah* ultimately belongs to Allāh: all *walāyah* comes from Allāh (*rubūbiyyah*); all *walāyah* returns to Allāh (*‘ubūdiyyah*):

All ‘Walāyah to Allāh the Real. [18:44]

Virtually all of the many stories, parables, and other symbols narrated by the Qur’ān are meant to illustrate and open up cognizance of the various relative cycles of *walāyah* such as:

- 1 The relationships of humanity to nature and its own technology (like riding in ships upon the sea);
- 2 The relationships of humanity among themselves including the doing of *ihsān* to parents and the importance of heeding the messengers (e.g., *Say: if you love Allāh then follow me; He will love you.* [3:31]);

There is an ultimate source of *Walāyah*.

and place them in the context of Absolute Universal *Walāyah*. Our entire purpose for existing, as well as our past, present, and future existence is tied up with this cosmic process of *walāyah*, of the dynamic between *‘ubūdiyyah* and *rubūbiyyah*. Mankind in particular has been called upon to positively respond and harmonize itself with this cosmic process so that it may achieve the Most Sublime Beauty and Goodness that is the particular goal of humanity:

For those who respond to their Cherisher and Lord is the Most Sublime Beauty and Goodness. As for those who do not respond to Him, if they had the wealth of the entire earth and that much more they would offer it as a ransom for themselves. [3:18]

We alluded above (page 81) to the fact that the Qur’ān has two proper names for the ultimate source of *walāyah*: ‘Allāh’ and ‘Al-Rahmān’. Of these the name ‘Allāh’ is by far the most commonly used both in the Qur’ān and in the traditions of the Prophet. A common question concerns the meaning of the word ‘Allāh’. There are over 2 dozen theories in Muslim literature about the etymology of ‘Allāh’. Of these we will consider the three most fundamental. Each corresponds to a different level of *etymological derivation*.

The simplest and most direct derivation of the expression ‘Allāh’ is the root *‘l h*, used in the word *‘ilāh*. The word *‘ilāh* is the closest word in Arabic to the English ‘god’ or ‘deity’. It literally means “one who is sought out as an ultimate source of help, guardianship, protection, and/or love”, that is, “one who is called upon as an ultimate source of *walāyah* and *rubūbiyyah*”.

The word *‘ilāh* is neutral with respect to *domain*. One may have many *ālīha* (plural of *‘ilāh*) or deities, each of whom is assumed to have ultimate and absolute *rubūbiyyah* over some domain of the macrocosm or the microcosm.

The word *‘ilāh* is also neutral with respect to *scope*. An *ilāh* may be intellectual, spiritual or physical. That is, with respect to some domain in life one may make ultimate and absolute appeal to something intellectual, such as one’s own reason; one may make ultimate and absolute appeal to something spiritual, such as a presumed spirit or one’s own feelings and desires; and one

In Arabic morphology there are three degrees of etymological derivation of a given word: *small*, *great*, and *greater*. In *small derivation*, the given word and its root share all root letters (usually exactly 3); in *great derivation* they share only two root letters; in *greater* they share only one. For *great* and *greater derivation* in particular there are phonetic guidelines determining which derivations are possible.

Dynamic certainty: See TSP, Principle 2.4.

may make ultimate and absolute appeal to something physical and material, such as material wealth or another living human being.

When considered as derived from ² l h and 'ilāh', then 'Allāh' means "the one and only one ultimate source of help, guardianship, protection and love to whom all of creation ultimately and absolutely directs its requests". This derivation is explicitly supported by at least two *ahādīth*:

- 1 A man asked Imām 'Alī about the meaning of the word 'Allāh' and the Imām replied,

He is the one to whom every creature does ta'alluh [a derivative of 'ilāh', the word 'ta'alluh' means "to seek out as an ultimate source of guardianship, recourse and help"] for relief of one's needs and hardships, when hope is completely lost in anyone beneath Him and when no one else besides Him has the means to help him... Even the mighty and arrogant have needs which they cannot overcome [with their wealth and means]. So they finally turn to Allāh in their difficulties and object needs; when their problems are solved they return to their partnering [that is, they turn to their wealth and power in addition to or in lieu of Allāh].

- 2 Hishām ibn al-Hakam asked Imām Šādiq about derivation of the word 'Allāh'. He replied,

O Hishām! It is derived from 'ilāh', and that which is an ilāh is an object of ultimate recourse.

The above discussion is based on the principles of *small derivation*. Moving on to *great derivation*, perhaps the most popular theory is that 'Allāh' is derived from *w l h*. There is an Arabic verb ² alīha' (from ² l h) that is known to have been originally 'walaha' (from *w l h*) and which means "to be in awe and perplexity of something to the point of losing one's senses", as well as "to be in intense yearning when in fear of something else", as a baby yearns for its mother when it is insecure. With this derivation 'Allāh' then means "the object of yearning and recourse

whose presence awes and perplexes those who contemplate Him". According to a *ḥadīth* narrated by Abū Ja'far al-Bāqir:

The meaning of 'Allāh' is "the object of adoration and service" [from "ubūdiyyah"] with respect to whom creation remains in awe and perplexity as to the perception of His Essence and encompassing His manner [of being]. The Arabs use the expression, 'aliha' for a man when he is perplexed by something and cannot gain knowledge of it, and 'waliha' when he seeks recourse to something from that which he fears and dreads. So the ilāh - Allāh - is the one who is hidden from all the modes of perception of the creation.

The onset of awe and perplexity with respect to the source of *walāyah* is also a major sign of the awakening of the heart to *ma'rīfah*. As Imām 'Alī has said,

Through much deep silence awe and reverence come about.

Awe, reverence, perplexity, and similar manifestations of consciousness are major characteristics of true *ubūdiyyah*. As the Qur'ān points out,

If We sent down this Qur'ān upon a mountain you would see it humble, cleaving itself asunder out of awe of Allāh. And those are the symbols we draw for the people; maybe they will reflect. [59:21]

Finally, moving on to *greater derivation*, it appears that the word 'Allāh' is derived from *w l y*; that is, it is derived from '*walāyah*'. In a very tantalizing *ḥadīth* Imām Šādiq narrates that the meaning of 'Allāh' is the following:

(He) enveloped in walāyah that which is minute and subtle and that which is grand and momentous.

That is, the *walāyah* of Allāh fully envelops everything, no matter how small or mighty.

This *ḥadīth* is full of subtle meaning that is largely lost in translation. Of particular importance is the fact that the meaning

The expression 'object of ultimate recourse' translates 'ma'īh', also a derivative of ² l h.

of 'Allāh' is expressed directly in terms of a *verb*, not a noun (in this case the verb is 'istawlā', meaning, "(he) enveloped [something] in walāyah"). Note that a given verb in Arabic constitutes, by itself, a complete sentence. Each verb contains what is called a "hidden pronoun" that is its subject. In usual practice an explicit pronoun or noun is placed in front of the verb to denote an explicit subject. It is significant that there is no such explicit pronoun mentioned in this *ḥadīth*. This apparently signifies the point made in the earlier tradition narrated by al-Bāqir:

[Allāh] is the one who is hidden from all the modes of perception of the creation.

In our translation we placed the 'He' in parentheses to point out that the pronoun is implicit, not explicit. The Essence of Allāh considered without regard to His active *walāyah* and *rubūbiyyah* is ultimately beyond discussion and description, even nameless as the Qur'²an itself alludes:

...Do you know of any namesake for Him? [19:65]

Ultimately the first thing we can really talk about is Allāh's active *walāyah* and *rubūbiyyah*, which is universal, all-embracing, and which envelops everything.

...and My Mercy encompasses each and every thing
[7:156]

This *walāyah* is an activity and best denoted by a verb. So the word 'istawlā' in the *ḥadīth*:

- 1 Points to the Essence (the Source of *walāyah*) without trying to capture it or even name it;
- 2 Informs us of the fundamental manifestation of that Essence (*walāyah* itself);
- 3 And thereby gives us that by which we may have cognizance of that Essence (again *walāyah*).

Tawḥīd involves the *ma'rifah* of Allāh's oneness.

An interesting point: Note that the first derivation of the name 'Allāh' (from ² l h, 'ilah', and 'ta'alluh') considers Allāh as the object of adoration, service, and seeking needs, irrespective of the degree of actual *ma'rifah* of the worshipper. The second derivation of 'Allāh' (from w l h and 'walaha') considers Allāh as the object of reverential and perplexing intense yearning on the part of those who would serve and adore Him. Finally, the third derivation of 'Allāh' makes no explicit reference to the attitudes of creatures whatsoever. Rather, it captures the complete manifestation of the Essence (*walāyah* and *rubūbiyyah*) of Allāh; it also indirectly alludes as well to the Essence of Allāh without trying to capture it.

Of course, the first two derivations both involve special cases of *walāyah*: particularly 'ubūdiyyah and the response to *rubūbiyyah*. The second derivation in particular (from 'walaha') involves a rather intense manifestation of the *walāyah* of 'ubūdiyyah. So no matter how one looks at it the very name 'Allāh' signifies *walāyah* in some way.

As we will explain further on, *ma'rifah* and 'ubūdiyyah do have different degrees. With just the weakest inkling that Allāh is there, just enough to acknowledge it with the tongue; that is all that is needed as far as *islām* in the limited sense is concerned. On the other hand, the field of *islām* in the fullest sense involves a continual development of *ma'rifah* and 'ubūdiyyah without ending at some limit or reaching a final goal.

4.2 Tawḥīd involves the *ma'rifah* of Allāh's oneness.

In *Islām*, the *ma'rifah* of Allāh is the foundation of 'ubūdiyyah, which in turn is the response of creation to *rubūbiyyah*. That is, it is the ground of that *walāyah* which is ultimately and absolutely focused on Allāh, the Giver of Universal 'Walāyah. This dynamic of *walāyah* fundamentally involves the principle that there is only one ultimate and absolute source of *walāyah*: Allāh. The oneness of Allāh and its ramifications are central to the *dīn* of *Islām* in a way that can hardly be exaggerated. The entire matrix of issues and processes related to the oneness of Allāh is called "tawḥīd." Put simply: *The aspect of 'ubūdiyyah that is concerned with the ma'rifah of Allāh's oneness is tawḥīd.*

The name 'Allāh' has three letters, 'l, and h. There is at least one *ḥadīth* that basically says that the 'l stands for the *walāyah* that is given by Allāh; the l stands for *walāyah* that is returned to Allāh. As for the h, it refers to the abjection facing the one who transgresses *walāyah*. So the three letters of the name 'Allāh' refer to the *walāyah* of Allāh, positive response to it, and negative response to it. Every action in the universe reduces to one of these three.

In later Muslim theology *tawhīd* is certainly treated a bit more like an abstract concept to be believed in (in the context of a dogmatic principle) rather than a cosmological or spiritual process.

The word '*tawhīd*' is usually translated with the expressions 'oneness' and even 'monotheism'. As is the case with so many other Islāmic expressions, the word '*tawhīd*' refers to an activity and not an abstract concept. *Tawhīd* is first and foremost something that one *does*. In particular, *tawhīd* involves the *ma'rifah* of Allāh's oneness and the field of response to that *ma'rifah*. It is a part of the field of '*ubūdiyyah* and *walāyah*. When a person sincerely declares, "There is no *ilāh* except for Allāh," one is engaging in *tawhīd*. And when one engages in *tawhīd*, one is engaging in '*ubūdiyyah*, which in turn is *walāyah*.

4.3 There are four kinds of *tawhīd*.

Tawhīd is so central in Islām that sometimes Islām is called the *dīn* of *Tawhīd*. The simplest act of *tawhīd* is just the declaration, "There is no *ilāh* except for Allāh," which is the first half of the outward declaration of Islām. But what exactly does this mean? It turns out that there are four kinds of *tawhīd*: *tawhīd* of essence, *tawhīd* of attributes, *tawhīd* of actions, and *tawhīd* of '*ubūdiyyah* and '*ibādah*. Let us discuss each of these in turn.

4.3.1 *Tawhīd* of Essence: There is only one ultimate source of *walāyah*.

Basically the *tawhīd* of essence involves the cognizance that there is only one *ilāh* or deity, Allāh:

Allāh has said: 'Do not (you all) take two deities; surely He is only One 'Deity. [16:51]

Say [O 'Prophet]: "It has surely been revealed to me that your deity is only one deity; are you going to deliver yourselves [to Him]?" [21:108]

Say [O people of imān]: "...Our deity and your deity is One 'Deity; we deliver ourselves to Him." [29:46]

The Qur'ān does not satisfy itself with merely making a dogmatic proclamation. Rather, this proclamation is virtually always preceded or followed by a strong encouragement of macrocosmic or microcosmic consciousness and reflective meditation, meant

There are four kinds of *tawhīd*.

to open a light in the heart to real cognizance of the essential oneness of Allāh. The following is a telling example:

...Is Allāh better or those whom they associate with Him?

Or who created the heavens and the earth, and sent down for you water from the sky; then through that water caused luxuriant gardens to grow (it is not possible for you yourselves to make the trees of those gardens grow)? Is there a deity besides Allāh? No, they are a community who swerve [from the right course].

Or who has made the earth a stable abode, and made throughout it rivers, and made for it mountain peaks, and made a barrier between the two bodies of water? Is there a deity besides Allāh? No, most of them just don't know.

Or who responds to the one in distress when he calls upon Him and who delivers him from suffering, and who makes you the inheritors of the earth? Is there a deity besides Allāh? How little it is you respond when you are reminded!

Or who guides you through the depths of darkness of land and sea; and who sends the winds bringing good news between the two hands of His mercy? Is there a deity besides Allāh? Allāh is so exalted above that which they associate with Him!

Or who initiates creation and then repeats it, and who provides for you from the sky and from the earth? Is there a deity besides Allāh? Say, "Give your proof if you are truthful!" [27:59-64]

One of the points being made by *āyāt* from the Qur'ān like the above is that the entire macrocosm and microcosm together form one continuous whole that cannot be cut up into separate boxes or domains. Hishām ibn al-Ḥakam once asked Imām Ṣādiq, "What is the proof that Allāh is One?" The Imām replied with the following *ḥadīth*:

The expressions 'deliver yourselves' and 'deliver ourselves' are, of course, direct derivatives of the word 'islām'.

[The proof lies in] the continuity of order in the cosmos and the completeness of its artistry, as He of Might and Majesty has said: 'If there had been within the heavens and the earth deities other than Allāh then they both would surely have become confused and corrupted!' [21:22]

Ch

The unity and continuity of macrocosm and microcosm is something generally agreed upon by people of consciousness, regardless of whether they even believe in Allāh. Physicists seek to understand the physical universe – from electrons to galaxies – in terms of a unified field theory and a single fundamental law; environmentalists and ecologists try to understand our planet in terms of holism and interrelatedness; and philosophers seek a view of the world or any of its parts that is complete and consistent. Virtually every field of human enquiry seeks a unified, cohesive paradigm on which to model the phenomena which that field investigates.

From this, the thought that any limited thing in the macrocosm and microcosm could have absolute and ultimate walāyah and guardianship over some particular domain of the macrocosm or microcosm is an affront to consciousness and reflective meditation. To explain: For those who believe in more than one god, each such assumed deity is generally some force or object in nature or the psyche, or else a symbol of such. So the god of thunder has absolute authority over the rain; the god of tilth has absolute authority over the crops, and so forth. But upon reflective meditation rain, crops, and the rest of the earth and sky are all interconnected; everything in land, sea and sky are ultimately dependent, not independent. At the same time they work in harmony with one another and in harmony with Universal 'Walāyah:

Surely those upon whom you call other than Allāh are adorer-servants like yourselves. [7:194]

The earth at large is sometimes worshipped as a deity but can the earth choose to not orbit the sun? Can the earth protect you if the sun were to stop shining?

Those upon whom you call besides Him are not capable of helping you all or even of helping themselves! [7:197]

Say: Call those you have decided upon (besides Him): They have not the power to relieve you of your distresses nor to change them. [17:56]

Neither the sun nor earth have any independent authority or power to do anything, let alone the symbols and idols that are supposed to represent the sun, earth, and other forces of nature and psyche, of macrocosm and microcosm. Rather, the earth and sun both operate in harmony with Universal 'Walāyah as adorers and servants of Allāh; they exercise walāyah towards Allāh in response to the walāyah of Allāh and return 'ubūdiyyah to Allāh's rubūbiyyah.

If not the forces of nature and psyche or their symbols, humans may even elevate other humans or spirits to the level of a deity. Yet it is the case that, along with the sun, earth, moon, and everything else in the macrocosm and microcosm:

Those upon whom they call do themselves seek out the means of access to their Cherisher and Lord, even those who are closest [to Him]. [17:57]

Nothing, no matter how high or low, is outside of Allāh's walāyah, His rubūbiyyah (cherishing and lordship). There is only one single source of walāyah:

There! all walāyah to Allāh the Real. [18:44]

4.3.2 Tawhīd of Attributes 1: Only Allāh has the attributes of ultimate walāyah and tanzīh.

Just as there is only one entity that is the ultimate source of walāyah, that source is absolutely unique and incomparable. Its characteristics and qualities (collectively called "attributes") are not shared by any other being whatsoever:

There is nothing like unto Him; and He is the All-hearing, the All-seeing. [42:11]

The issue of tawhīd of attributes is so important to understand correctly – and so easy to slip up on – that it has led to some of the most lengthy and detailed discussions in later Muslim theology.

Beginning with this issue Islām charts a path up the stairs of the tower of *ma'rifah* and cognizance distinct from many other cosmologies and philosophies that acknowledge the reality of Allāh. Yes, many agree in effect that there is only one ultimate and real source of *walāyah* and existence, but what is the nature of the Source; what is the proper *ma'rifah* or cognizance of that Source?

Yet the Qur'ān has encapsulated all aspects of the *tawhīd* of attributes in a single *sūrah*, the 112th. The importance of this *sūrah* – alternatively called "*Tawhīd*," "*Ikhlās*" ("*Sincerity*," see *ISP*, Subprinciple 2.5.4), or "*Nisbatu āl-Rabb*" ("*Lineality of the Cherisher-Lord*") – cannot be overestimated. Although it consists of only five short lines, it has been described by the Prophet as encapsulating one third of the entire Qur'ān. In the spiritual life of Muslims this *sūrah* plays a role that cannot be exaggerated.

Once a group of Jews (who of course are also monotheists) came to the Prophet of Islām and requested of him, "Relate and describe to us your Cherisher and Lord!" Now the word translated with 'relate and describe' is normally used when tracing someone's genealogy, ancestry, pedigree, or relations with others (collectively known as *lineality*). So in making this request the Jews were actually making two requests: describe who Allāh is and tell us His lineal relationship to everything else.

The Prophet paused for 3 hours (or 3 days) and did not say anything. Then the following *sūrah* was revealed:

In the Name of Allāh Al-Rahmān the Specifically Merciful.

Say: He Allāh Single!

Allāh the Singularity!

He did not beget and He was not begotten.

And not a single [one] equal to him has or will ever come about. [112]

A decent commentary on these five lines would fill many pages, and any translation is really inadequate, yet the basic idea is pretty clear. Together, the expressions '*ahad*' ('single') and '*ṣamad*' ('singularity') denote a unique, solitary and impenetrable being of infinite density and presence where space, time, matter, location,

and structure have absolutely no meaning. The word '*ṣamad*' especially is one of the most difficult words in the Arabic language to understand, let alone translate. Even in the Qur'ān the word '*ṣamad*' and its root only appear once, within this very *sūrah*. On the other hand, we are fortunate to find in the English word 'single' a reasonably close approximation of '*ahad*'.

Together the qualities *Single* and *Singularity* capture that all-important aspect of the *tawhīd* of attributes known as *tanzīh*. '*Tanzīh*' involves a cognizance of Allāh's *ahad*-ness and *ṣamad*-ness to the point of ecstatic exclamation. The most common exclamation of *tanzīh* is the phrase '*subhāna allāh!*', an ecstatic expression literally impossible to translate. Usually it is translated by something like 'Glory be to Allāh!' or 'May Allāh be glorified!' each of which may capture something of '*subhāna allāh!*'.

There are a number of *ahādīth* to the effect that when one says '*subhāna allāh!*' one is engaging in the *tanzīh* of Allāh. So perhaps more accurately, '*subhāna allāh!*' means "May Allāh be cognized as free of and above all imperfection and limits; and as free of and above any association or partnership with anything else whatsoever!"



A SUBTLETY (may be skipped on a first reading): The root of the word '*subhāna*', *s b h* is used to mention swimming. It also is used to mention the activity of floating, such as a moon, planet, or star in orbit. When the moon floats about the earth, it floats or "swims" about an imaginary sphere (more properly, an ellipsoid). The outer surface of this sphere provides the moon with its *degrees of freedom*. That is, the moon is free to move about the outer surface of this imaginary sphere smoothly without hindrance.

The more degrees of freedom, the more free the swimming or floating. As a rocket ship struggles to escape the earth's gravity, it is constrained. If the ship ceases to struggle and cuts off its engines, it will fall to the earth; it will not float or swim. If it continues to fight, then once it reaches a certain threshold it will escape enough of the earth's gravity and orbit the earth like the moon. If the rocket ship flies out even further away from the earth, it will break from the earth's orbit and float with even more degrees of

One connotation of '*ṣamad*' pertains to Allāh as the one upon whom one may place absolute, ultimate, reliance (*tawakkul*). Impenetrable, infinite density points to a point of reference that cannot be moved or perturbed; hence He may be relied upon without the slightest worry that He needs to rely upon anything else. He is at once the 'Unstoppable Force' (*Qūḥār*) and the 'Immovable Object' (*Ṣamad*). In relying upon the *Ṣamad* one needs no one else at all. '*Tawakkul*' is one of the highest stages of *īmān*: see *ISP*, page 93.

Ch
Interestingly, this *sūrah* is sometimes, admittedly rarely, called "*Sūrah Walāyah*."

He did not beget and He was not begotten: Hence His lineality is absolutely negative: There is no lineal relationship between Allāh and anything else. Put philosophically: Allāh is beyond categories, types, and kinds. Therefore He cannot be compared with anything. This is the *nisbatu āl-rabb* (lineality of the Cherisher-Lord).

freedom from restraint, although the influence of other celestial bodies is still present.

Now consider what happens if there are infinite degrees of freedom. At that point there is absolute, total freedom from constraint and limitations. This is the ultimate floating, the ultimate swimming. Put another way: It is floating that cannot be described as floating; it is swimming that cannot be described by swimming or movement. It is *tanzih*. END OF SUBTLETY.



Getting *tanzih* just right is a delicate matter. There are two extremes which must be avoided: *comparison* (*tashbih*) and *nullification* (*ta'fil*). Comparison involves the view that Allāh's attributes are like the attributes and qualities of humans or even other limited beings. So if Allāh can see, then He has eyes in some sense (even if it is a sublime sense); if He can hear, then he has ears in some sense (even if it is a sublime sense); and so forth. Nullification involves the view that Allāh does not exist at all; or that if He does exist He cannot see, hear, have knowledge of particulars, and so forth (as we will describe further on).

Both comparison and nullification are firmly rejected in Islām. Rather, as Abū Ja'far al-Bāqir narrates in a *ḥadīth*:

He [Allāh] is to be cognized apart from two extremes: the extreme of nullification and the extreme of comparison.

Further on we will discuss those attributes of Allāh which cannot be nullified or negated. Here we will say something about *tashbih* (*comparison*). The general principle for avoiding the trap of comparison is expressed within the following *ḥadīth* narrated by Imām Bāqir:

Everything which you all discriminate in your minds, in its most profound meanings, is a created thing like yourselves and is reverted back to you.

This brings us to an important point. Allāh is neither material, spiritual, nor intellectual; He is beyond any human category of

There are four kinds of *tawḥīd*.

description whatsoever. Allāh has no form and no body; is not male and not female. As al-Bāqir narrates,

...[He is] neither an object of thought nor a limited being. Whatsoever your mind falls upon is other than Him. Nothing compares to Him and no minds can perceive Him. How can minds perceive Him when he is other than that which can be thought, and other than that which can be pictured in the minds? The only thing [with respect to Allāh] that can be considered is something which is neither an object of thought nor a limited being.

And in another *ḥadīth* we read:

'Whoever tries to cognize His Essence through tashbih has not cognized Allāh; and whoever tries to penetrate His Core has not done tawḥīd of Him; whoever seeks similarities for Him cannot reach His Reality.

Allāh cannot be recognized through the limits and attributes of His creation. Rather, as narrated by Imām 'Alī,

No form resembles Him, He cannot be sensed with any of the senses, and He cannot be compared with people; Near in His Farness, Far in His Nearness; above everything and nothing above Him; before everything and nothing before Him; inside of everything but not as a thing is inside something else; outside of everything but not as a thing is outside of something else. Free of and above all imperfection and limits is whoever is like this! And no one is like this other than Him; everything else has a beginning.

This last tradition captures an important issue with respect to *tanzih*: *Tanzih* involves not only the point that Allāh has nothing in common with creation, but also the point that He is – in the same respect – closer to His creation than anything else, and farther from creation than anything else. He is

...the 'First and the Last; the Manifest and the Hidden.
[57:3]

In technical terms, *tanzih* in primordial Islamic cosmology involves a kind of negative theology. This is not to deny that a number of schools of thought arose after the earliest generations of Muslim civilization that adhered to one form or other of *tashbih* or anthropomorphism. On the other hand, the Qur'an and the Prophet's views transmitted through his family are unequivocal about the path of *tanzih*.

Your Cherisher-Lord, Cherisher-Lord of Might, be glorified above and beyond what they describe!

...closer to man than his own jugular vein. [50:16]

‘Ali ibn al-Ḥusayn the grandson of Imām ‘Ali narrates a supplication that beautifully summarizes the two sides of *tanzīh*:

Ch

O Hidden in His Manifestness! O Manifest in His Hiddenness! O Hidden 'Who does not conceal Himself! O Manifest 'Who cannot be seen! O One who is described yet nothing described nor any limited limit can reach His 'Being! O Absent and not missing! O 'Witness and not witnessed! He is sought so 'He is found, and the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them are not free of Him for the blink of an eye! He is not perceived by "How?" Cannot be located by "Where?" or "What manner?" You are the 'Light of light, and the Cherisher and 'Lord of all cherishers and lords! You encompass all affairs! Free of and above all imperfection and limits is He for whom Nothing is like unto Him and He is the All-Seeing the All-Knowing ([42:11])!

'Free of and above all imperfection and limits is whoever is like this! and no one is like this other than Him!

ANOTHER PHILOSOPHICAL POINT: A number of later Muslim mystical cosmologists have missed the second half of *tanzīh*, namely that between Allāh and creation there is no separation. This led them to reintroduce *tashbīh* into the Divine Essence to balance *tanzīh*, an approach which inexorably leads to polytheism in the form of pantheism. The point is not to balance *tanzīh* and *tashbīh*, but to, through *tanzīh*, avoid *tashbīh* and *ta'ṭīl*. This is an extremely important issue that deserves a much fuller treatment elsewhere.

A being who is unique, impenetrable and infinite has characteristics that no limited being can have. It has no boundaries and thus has no relations between itself and anything else. Yet It is beyond location and cannot be separate from anything else. So avoiding *tashbīh* and *ta'ṭīl* involves the very profound apparent paradox: 'Between Allāh and creation there is no connection, and between Allāh and creation there is no separation. This is the path of *tanzīh*.

BEGINNING OF PHILOSOPHICAL POINT (may be skipped on a first reading): By negating any real connection between Allāh and His creation we avoid the extreme of *tashbīh* or comparison. If a real connection existed between Allāh and creation, then that connection would place Allāh and His creation in a single category or universe of discourse from which one could make a comparison. For example: Successorship is a relation between natural numbers: 3 is the successor of 2. Thus through the successorship-relation we can compare and contrast natural numbers (and develop the science of arithmetic).

There are four kinds of *tawḥīd*.

On the other hand, by negating any real separation between Allāh and His creation we avoid the extreme of *ta'ṭīl* or nullification. The singularity of Allāh's *ṣamad*-ness involves a total breakdown of locality and distance. Hence Allāh's existence is non-localizable: Allāh is everywhere and nowhere in particular. He is Present to all of creation through His creation, and creation is the very *āyah* or sign of His presence. He is inseparable from His creation, but that inseparability is not a relation between Him and creation. One needs to meditate on this. END OF PHILOSOPHICAL POINT.

The Single, Singularity is beyond time. A rabbi asked Imām ‘Ali, "When was your Cherisher and Lord?" He replied,

My Cherisher and Lord was before any before with no before, and after any after with no after.

That is, Allāh is prior to any before and after, but not in the usual sense of the expressions 'before' and 'after' because in the usual sense those very expressions connote a temporal relationship. With respect to His Essence, 'before' and 'after' have no meaning.

The mysteries, profundities, and paradoxes of *tanzīh*, *aḥad*-ness and *ṣamad*-ness comprise one of the most fascinating fields of *tawḥīd* and cosmological *walāyah*. Especially in the speeches and supplications transmitted through the Family of the Prophet, there are numerous detailed and eloquent discussions of these matters; we cannot hope to adequately fathom them here. We end this primary discussion of *tanzīh* with a short commentary transmitted by Imām Ṣādiq on the meaning of Sūrah Tawḥīd:

[Sūrah Tawḥīd] constitutes Allāh's relating and describing of Himself to His creation as 'Pre-eternally, Infinitely-Impenetrably Unique, Infinite-Impenetrable; He has no shadow which can grasp Him, while He grasps all things through their shadows; Cognizant of that of which all else are ignorant, cognized by every ignorant; [relating and describing of Himself] as Solitary; His creation is not located within Him and He is not located within His creation; as Non-sensible [with the physical sense], Non-touchable [with one's hand], no vision can perceive Him [6:103]. He is Exalted so He is Close, and Immediately Proximate so

The rabbi was so impressed with the answer given by the Imām that he exclaimed, "Are you a prophet!?" To which the Imām answered, I am only a servant of the servants of Muḥammad (ṣ).

Ch

He is Far; was disobeyed so He forgave, and obeyed so He multiplied His bounty. His earth does not encompass Him and His heavens do not diminish Him. [He is the] carrier of all things through His Power, Everlasting Pre-eternal. He does not forget, is not distracted, does not err, and does not play. There is no interruption to his 'Will; His division [of creation according to their deeds] is to award, and His Command is inevitable. **He did not beget** so as anyone could inherit from Him; **He was not begotten** so as He would be in partnership [with someone else]; **and not a single unique [one] equal to him has or will ever come about.**

4.3.3 Allāh cannot be seen by the eyes.

A corollary of *tanzīh* is that Allāh cannot be seen by the naked eye. As Allāh told Moses,

[Moses said,] My Cherisher and Lord! Make me see so that I may look upon you! He replied "You will never see me..." [7:143]

Furthermore:

Vision does not perceive Him yet He perceives all vision; He is the Subtle, the All-aware. [6:103]

To posit any ocular vision of Allāh is to posit a location for Him, for ocular sight is always in a certain direction and encompasses a specific field of vision. Furthermore, if human eyesight can capture Allāh then Allāh must belong to the category of objects that human sight can capture. One can then compare Allāh with other visible objects. Whatever the human eye can see has a shape, body, or form. In the case of Allāh, however, as Imām Ṣādiq narrates,

He is a thing with the inner reality of thing-ness⁶ without being a body or form: He cannot be sensed, felt, or perceived through the five senses.

⁶ inner reality of thing-ness: Here is an allusion to the Islamic cosmological position that only Allāh is truly real, everything else has "thing-ness" only with respect to His *ḥudūd* and *rubūbiyyah*, that is, only with respect to being a sign and pointer to His Presence. Put another way: Allāh has absolute thing-ness; creation has relative thing-ness. And there is no comparison between absolute and relative thing-ness.

②

4

To posit ocular vision of Allāh is to consider him as having body and shape. And to consider him as having body and shape is to create a subtle idol or statue of Allāh. And to worship an idol or statue of Allāh is to completely negate *tawhīd*.

Related to the above discussion is the use of metaphor in the Qur'ān. At the time of the Prophet, pre-Classical Arabic – in particular the dialect spoken by the Prophet, generally acknowledged as the most sublime – was generally well understood. It was not necessary for the Prophet to explain every linguistic device employed in the Qur'ān, since most of his listeners understood it.

Within two generations of the Prophet's passing, however, the degradation in linguistic prowess among the Arabs became quite serious. This was due in large part to the fact that, after the Prophet, Islām had spread to many non-Arab lands, the younger generations began mixing with other peoples, and other peoples began to learn Arabic. Furthermore, with the rise of institutional totalitarian empire in the Muslim world after the death of Imām 'Alī, access to the Family of the Prophet and to the most learned of the Companions and their students was heavily restricted by the authorities, allowing confusions to creep in.

Hence, a simple expression in the Qur'ān where Allāh refers to His *hand* began to be understood by some as Allāh actually having a real hand connected to His being. For example:

Favor and bounty is through the hand of Allāh; He gives it to whom He wishes. And Allāh is all-Encompassing and Liberal-in-giving, All-knowing. [3:73]

Do not tie your hand to your neck; nor extend your hand completely so that you end up in a blameworthy and sorrowful state. [17:29]

The use of 'hand' here is a clear reference to generosity and munificence. In English we have the expression 'openhanded' which connotes the same idea. Whether or not someone is openhanded has nothing to do with whether or not that person possesses one or both limbs. In the first *āyah* above, reference is made to Allāh's

generosity. In the second, reference is made to human generosity: That is, do not be stingy, but do not be so giving that you are left with nothing to take care of your responsibilities. Allāh does not have a bodily hand, and neither does a stingy person actually tie his hand with rope around his neck. The use of 'hand' is clearly metaphorical in both cases.

Similarly:

Magnified is the One in Whose Hand is the dominion; He is powerful over each and every thing. [67:1]

[O Prophet!] *Be patient with what they say, and call to presence our adorer-servant David, possessing hands; surely he was one who constantly turned back [to Allāh] in penitence...*

...And We strongly empowered his dominion; and We gave him wisdom and clear, decisive judgement. [38:17, 20]

The first *ayah* explains itself: What 'Hand' names here is Power. And if there is any doubt, consider the use of 'hands' with respect to David. After mentioning that David possessed *hands*, the Qur'ān mentions the empowerment of his dominion. David's physical hands are obviously not the point here.

Finally, consider this *ayah*:

He is the One Who sends the winds - bringing glad tidings [of rain] - between the two hands of His Mercy... [7:57]

As you have already learned, *His Mercy* is nothing other than Universal *Walāyah*. The use of the 'hands' metaphor in *two hands of His Mercy* are meant to mention aspects of this field of *walāyah* that envelops all things. Virtually every reference in the Qur'ān that uses, with respect to Allāh, a metaphor such as 'hand', 'face', and so forth, is referring to an aspect of His created Universal *Walāyah*.



Someone once asked Imām Muḥammad Bāqir about the *ayah*,

O Iblis! What prevents you from prostrating to what I have created by My two hands? [38:75]

The Imām explained,

The word 'hand' in the speech of the Arabs refers to bounty and to power.

There are two general aspects to Allāh's *walāyah* and *rubūbiyyah*. One is *bounty*, which encompasses Allāh's attributes of cherishing such as: beauty, generosity, grace, subtlety, forbearance, mercy, freedom of choice and all the attributes of softness and tenderness. Then there is *power*, which embraces all of Allāh's attributes of lordship such as: majesty, justice, punishment, wrath, strength and all the attributes of authority and guardianship. These are the two wings of Universal *Walāyah*: From the first springs the light of hope; from the second springs the light of fear (see *TSP*, page 69). Yet, as is narrated in supplications handed down from the Prophet's Family, Allāh is

He whose Mercy outstrips His Wrath...

Relating to humanity: The human being is the one whom Allāh created by *My two hands*, the two aspects of Universal *Walāyah*. That is, the ideal human being is a perfect microcosm of Universal *Walāyah* and its two wings, Bounty and Power.



Although Allāh cannot be seen by the naked eye, this does not mean that Allāh cannot be seen at all. As Imām Ṣādiq reports,

Someone asked Imām 'Alī, "Have you seen your Cherisher and Lord when you adore and serve Him?" He replied, "Careful! I do not adore and serve a cherisher and lord that I cannot see." The man asked, "How do you see Him?" The Imām replied, "Careful! Eyes cannot see Him through the witnessing of ocular vision. However, the hearts can see Him through the realities of Imān."

In the Qur'ān, 'Iblis' is the proper name of the Devil or Satan.

See the discussion on the derivation of the name 'Allāh' from 'walāyah' (beginning on page 101). We will revisit the relation between Mercy and *walāyah* under Subprinciple 4.3.6 (see the discussion starting on page 128), which begins, "Knowledge from Him, hearing from Him..."

We will return to a discussion of the vision of Allāh later during the course of *ISP*, Subprinciple 2.5.5, in particular under the heading *Ḥaqqu ʾal-Yaqīn* (*ISP*, page 107). Basically, the vision of Allāh involves the cognizance of a great *āyah* through which one experiences, not the Essence of Allāh, but a manifestation of the attributes of *tanzīh*. This experience constitutes the "vision" of Allāh.

4.3.4 *Tawḥīd of Attributes 2: The attributes of the Essence are identical to the Essence.*

We have used the word 'Essence' a number of times already. By 'Essence' we refer to the reality of Allāh per se without regard to any of its manifestations, signs, or actions in the macrocosm and microcosm. The expression 'Essence' is a translation of the Arabic word *dhāt* (originally a feminine possessive noun). This word occurs in a number of *ahādīth* in regards to the *tawḥīd* of attributes.

The Qurʾān and traditions mention a number of attributes and qualities of Allāh's Essence per se, called "attributes of Essence" or "essential attributes." The attributes of Essence are of two kinds:

1 *Attributes of Tanzīh*

We have discussed *tanzīh* in the previous Principle. The unique thing about the attributes of *tanzīh* is that they pertain to the Essence of Allāh per se. That is, they refer to the Origin of *walāyah* without regard to its awareness of or power over creation. They refer to its Majesty and Beauty, its Nearness and Farness, its Manifestness and Hiddenness, its Presence and Absence, its Everywhere-ness and Nowhere-ness; its Might, Subtlety, Holiness, and Eternity; that is, those attributes which affirm Allāh apart from *tashbīh* (comparison with creation) and *taʿtīl* (nullification or abstraction).

2 *Attributes of Essential 'Walāyah.*

These are those attributes which:

- i Are manifested in Allāh's *walāyah* over His creation; and

There are four kinds of *tawḥīd*.

- ii Cannot be nullified or negated of the Essence of Allāh at all (hence, "essential *walāyah*"). That is, these attributes are inseparable from Allāh, and the being which does not have them cannot be Allāh.

Under this Principle we discuss the attributes of Essential 'Walāyah (hereafter just called the "attributes of Essence").

Among the attributes of Essential 'Walāyah are positive attributes such as All-powerful (*qadīr*), All-knowing (*ʿalīm*), All-seeing (*baṣīr*), and All-hearing (*samīʿ*).

To deny any of these attributes of Allāh is to nullify the reality and nature of Allāh in His Essence. That is, it is not the case that Allāh in His Essence does not see everything; it is not the case that Allāh in His Essence does not have power over everything; it is not the case that the Essence of Allāh does not know something, whether general (such as what kinds of things exist) or particular (such as how many blades of grass live in the White House lawns).

At the same time, despite the similarities in name, the positive attributes of the Essence are ultimately incomparable to those of creation with similar names. The following *ḥadīth* narrated by Imām Ṣādiq is one of the best summaries and synopses of the attributes of Essence:

Allāh of Might and Majesty is and always was [i.e., eternally, prior to the creation or existence or anything else] our Cherisher and Lord: Knowledge is His Essence and there is no object of knowledge; Hearing is His Essence and there is no object heard; Seeing is His Essence, and there is no object seen; Power is His Essence and there is no object over which power may be exerted. Once He originated things and the object of knowledge came to be, then knowledge from Him fell upon the object of knowledge, hearing [from Him fell] upon the object heard, vision [from Him fell] upon the object seen; and power [from Him fell] upon that over which power may be exerted.

This *ḥadīth* analyzes the nature of Allāh's attributes of Essence into two issues: one with respect to the *Essence*, and one with respect to the *manifestation of the Essence* (this manifestation constitutes the Essential 'Walāyah of the Essence).

A SURTLETY:
These attributes of Essential 'Walāyah are sometimes called "attributes of relation" (*idā-fah*). This is because what we understand from the names of these attributes is directly related to the essential, created *walāyah* of Allāh over creation. By the expression 'attributes of relation' we do not mean that there is any essential connection between Allāh and creation; this would violate *tanzīh*.

With respect to the *Essence* per se there is absolutely no difference between Allāh and the attributes of Essence. For a human, his power of sight is not his essence, his power of lifting and carrying is not his essence, and so forth. Also, as in a human, the power of lifting is not identical to the power of sight and so forth. In the case of the Essence of Allāh per se, there is no distinction between any of these attributes in the Essence; each are identical to each other and to the Essence:

He is All-hearing All-seeing: All-hearing without any limb [such as an ear]; All-seeing without any instrument [such as an eye]. Rather, He hears through His Self and sees through His Self. And My saying, "He hears through His Self," does not mean that He is one thing and His Self is another.

In addition, the attributes of Allāh in His Essence are outside of time and space:

Allāh of Might and Majesty was and is and there is nothing other than Him [in His Essence]; is and always was Knowing of that which comes to be, so that His Knowledge of it be before its coming to be is the same as His Knowledge of it after its coming to be.

At the level of existence and being that is the Essence, there is nothing other than the Essence. The comings and goings of created things have no effect at all on the Essence and its Essential Attributes which are none other than that very Essence.

With respect to the *manifestation* of the Essence one may consider the manifestation of the Essence as created knowledge, created hearing, created seeing, and created power. The *ḥadīth* says, *Once He originated things and the object of knowledge came to be, then knowledge from Him fell upon the object of knowledge.* That is, at the instance of creation a pair, a *walāyah*-relationship, comes into existence: the object of knowledge and a created knowledge *from Him*. That object of knowledge constitutes all of the various objects of creation; the created knowledge *from Him* encompasses and attaches to all of those various objects. Similarly, a created hearing *from Him* attaches to all of those various objects,

There are four kinds of *tawḥīd*.

a created seeing *from Him* attaches to all of those various objects, and finally a created power *from Him* attaches to all of those various objects.

This created knowledge, hearing, seeing, and power describes Allāh's *activity* in the created world. This activity is the fundamental manifestation of the Essence. This activity is really none other than Universal *Walāyah* or Universal *Rubūbiyyah*. That is, the field of *walāyah* that encompasses each and every thing constitutes Allāh's Power in action, His Hearing in action, His Seeing in action, His Knowledge in action; i.e., His Essence in action. Put another way, Allāh acts in the world through the manifestation of His Essence, and that manifestation is none other than the field of Universal *Walāyah*. The characterization of that field with knowledge, hearing, seeing, and power tells us that the field of Universal *Walāyah* is a field of consciousness that is a manifestation of the Consciousness of the Essence (which is none other than the Essence).

Note however that Universal *Walāyah* is not a self-subsisting thing on its own that *does* anything on its own. Rather, this *walāyah* is the very *doing* of the Essence itself in creation, through which we cognize the Essence. For example: We cognize the Power that is the Essence through the manifestation of that power in *walāyah*: the movements of the tides, the power of a flood, the orbiting of the moon about the earth through gravity and so forth; through cognizance of the power that flows through each of these phenomena, and through the cognizance of the interrelatedness of these phenomena as manifestations of just one phenomenon of *walāyah*, we then cognize that the Essence projecting that *walāyah* must be All-powerful:

***There! all walāyah to Allāh the Real.* [18:44]**

4.3.5 *Tawḥīd of Actions: Only Allāh can affect the Actions of rubūbiyyah.*

As we explained above, the Essence manifests Itself through its own field of activity which is the *walāyah* of *rubūbiyyah*: (*He*) *enveloped in walāyah that which is minute and subtle and that which is grand and momentous.* This field of *walāyah* is the activity

of the Essence, not the Essence Itself. So we may speak of two sets of attributes:

- 1 the attributes of the Essence per se;
- 2 the attributes of the activity of the Essence.

According to the Qur'ān and the traditions, the activity of the Essence is characterized by *wish* (*mashi'ah*) or *desire* (*irādah*). Everything that exists is an outcome of the wish and desire of Allāh. The expressions 'wish' and 'desire' are the most general names of *walāyah* with respect to the act of bringing about creation. Also, wish and desire are among the very highest degrees of Universal *Walāyah* or *rubūbiyyah*. The dynamic of movement and creation in the field of *walāyah* begins with the wish and desire of Allāh.

It is important to note that the will is *not* an attribute of the Essence per se. Rather:

The one who desires cannot be unless that which is desired is with him. Allāh always was and is Knowing and Powerful; then He desired.

That is if the will were an attribute of the Essence then the object willed would also have to be in the Essence, even if just as an object of thought. This is because willing always involves willing something. And that something, even if only a thought, is something additional to the essence of the one who wills it. In the case of Allāh's Essence that would contradict *tawhīd*. Allāh's willing is different from human willing:

The will that comes from creation [i.e., humans] involves the mind; what appears to them afterwards is their activity [i.e., the will takes root in the mind and manifests outwardly as action]. As for the will that comes from Allāh, it is His act of originating [things], not other than that. This is because He does not contemplate, deliberate, or reflect – these attributes must be negated of Him; for they are the attributes of creation. So the will of Allāh is His Activity, nothing else. He says to a thing, "Become!" and it comes to be

[36:82], without words, without movement of a tongue, without deliberation, without reflective meditation. There is no "manner" to that, just as there is "manner" to Him [in His Essence].

The activity of Allāh that is His *walāyah* of *rubūbiyyah* is the nexus or bridge between the Essence and creation:

Allāh created the 'Wish (Mashi'ah) through itself. Then He created the things through the 'Wish.

At the very highest degrees of the *walāyah* of *rubūbiyyah* lies the wish. It is the first manifestation of the Essence. It is created through itself so that there is no created activity before it. And through it He created the things (that is, everything else) so that everything in existence is an outcome of His wish.

The most important specific attributes of activity are *creating*, *providing*, *giving life*, and *giving death*. Each of these activities also involves Allāh's wish and will, as we will discuss in Principle 5.1. When we speak of the *tawhīd* of actions we are referring to the cognizance of the following point. *Allāh and only Allāh* is ultimately and fundamentally responsible for the creation of the cosmos and everything in it, providing for the subsistence of everything in the cosmos, giving life, and giving death:

Allāh is the one who created you; then He provided for you; then He gives you death; then He gives you life [again]. Are there any amongst your associates who can do any of that?!? How high and exalted is Allāh above that which they associate [with Him]! [30:40]

Show me what they have created in the earth, or did they have a part in the creation of the heavens? [46:4]

This is the creation of Allāh, so show me what others less than Him have created! But the unjust are in clear error. [33:11]

...Or have they established for Allāh associates who create as He has created so that their creation can compare with His? Say: Allāh is the Creator of everything and he is the One, the Irresistible. [13:16]

Ch

So the ultimate attributes of Creator, Provider, Giver of life, Giver of death belong only to Allāh; no one else has any share. Note that this does not deny that creating, providing, etc. take place locally. That is, one may create a statue from clay, give charity to one in need, give birth to a child, or kill an animal. The point is that, in each case, the wish and desire of Allāh is involved, so nothing happens whatsoever without His permission. The cases just mentioned are relative to Allāh's Universal *Walāyah*. Nothing whatsoever can happen independent of His *rubūbiyyah*, whether directly or indirectly.

Another attribute of action is *justice*. Allāh is absolutely just with His creation, all of His actions have purpose, and He is never capricious.

The attributes of activity also include *speaking*. That is, Allāh speaks and communicates with His creation. We discuss this particular attribute in more detail further on (see Principle 5.4).



How may we distinguish between the attributes of Action and those of Essence? The criterion for distinguishing these lies in the following: The attributes of Action may be negated of Allāh. Allāh may will something or He may not; He may create something or He may not, He may provide someone or He may not; He may give something life or He may not. The attributes of Essence, on the other hand, may not be negated of the Essence at all. Allāh sees and knows; it is not the case that he does not see or know something; and so on.

Put another way: The difference between the attributes of Essence and the attributes of Action lies in that the first are attributes of *essential walāyah* and the attributes of Actions are attributes of *voluntary walāyah*. That is, Allāh *chooses* to create or destroy, provide or deny, etc.:

And your Cherisher-Lord creates what He wishes and He chooses... [28:68]

Seeing, Hearing, Knowing, and Power, on the other hand, are not matters of choice but are identical to Allāh's Essence.

4.3.6 Allāh is mentioned and addressed through His names.

An important feature of the science of the firm sign lies in its cosmology of the divine names of Allāh. Each attribute of Essence and Action is mentioned by use of one or more divine names. Also, it is through the divine names that we communicate with Allāh:

Say [O Prophet]: Call out to Allāh, or call out to Al-Rahmān; however you call out to him, He has the most beautiful names. [17:110]

Among the divine names, ninety-nine in particular stand out in popular Muslim consciousness, as well as a number of *ahādīth* (although the number of beautiful names is by no means limited to those ninety-nine). Some names are used to mention the attributes of *tanzīh*, like the virtually untranslatable '*Subbūh*' (very roughly 'Pure Glory') and '*Quddūs*' (very roughly 'Pure Holiness'); some are used to mention the attributes of the Essence and essential *walāyah*, such as '*Qadir*' ('All-Powerful') and '*Baṣīr*' ('All-Seeing'); finally, others are used to mention the attributes of Allāh's Action and the dynamic manifestation of His Universal *Walāyah* and *Rubūbiyyah*, such as '*Khāliq*' (Creator) and '*Rāziq*' (Provider).

Here we will discuss a couple of important issues that pertain to the divine names, *tanzīh*, and *tawhīd* in general. Some of the following discussion may be rather difficult and may be skipped on a first reading.

For one thing, it is important to distinguish the names of Allāh from Allāh. It is also important to distinguish the concepts expressed by the names of Allāh from Allāh. So the name 'All-seeing' is certainly different from the name 'All-knowing'. But the One intended by these and other divine names is the same. Furthermore, these names do not name multiple qualities of Allāh. Rather, these names constitute *signs* of a Single, Unique, and Singular Essence. Yes, the names have differences in meaning and concept according to our human understanding and experience. But these multiple concepts do not capture the One Named:

The three-way distinction between a given name, that which is named, and that which the mind grasps through the name (i.e., the concept expressed by the name) is very important in the discussion of the divine names, and adds to the difficulty of this topic. Even some of the *ahādīth* on this topic are quite difficult in some respects.

The discussion of Allāh's justice takes us into deep waters relating to human agency, Allāh's foreknowledge of human actions, and depths of the relation between free will and divine destiny. We will save a more detailed discussion of these matters for another occasion. See also Principle 5.3.

Everything which you all discriminate in your minds, in its most profound meanings, is a created thing like yourselves and is reverted back to you.

Ch

BEGINNING OF PHILOSOPHICAL POINT (may be skipped on a first reading): Normally, a name *names* the object for which it is named, and *expresses* a concept of that object. Through experience with a thing, one grasps a concept of that thing. For example: Through your experience of Canada (whether in person, television, books, or some other medium), you grasp a concept of Canada. If you talk to your friend about Canada, you both will understand one another, even if neither of you is in Canada. That is, you both grasp a concept of Canada.

For example: The phrase 'the country immediately east of Alaska' is a name which *names* the country Canada and expresses a concept of Canada. The name 'the country north of the continental United States' names the same country Canada but expresses a different concept of Canada. Similarly, the name 'the country whose capital is Ottawa' again names the same country Canada but expresses yet a different concept of Canada. We understand something different from each of these names (different concepts of Canada); yet each name names the very same Canada. Through each name your mind grasps something which directly corresponds to Canada, and by means of which you can understand something about Canada. Put another way, each name expresses a concept, which in turn corresponds to an *aspect* of Canada.

In the case of Allāh, however, something different happens. The names of Allāh still name *one* Allāh. Yet they *apparently* express different concepts. The name 'All-knowing' expresses a different concept than the name 'All-seeing', although both name the same being: Allāh. That is, the concept we immediately understand from the name 'All-knowing' is different from the concept we immediately understand from the name 'All-seeing'.

Now we have two concepts, "All-knowing" and "All-seeing". The concept "the country immediately east of Alaska" and the concept "the country whose capital is Ottawa" each correspond to a different aspect of Canada – Can we say that the concepts "All-knowing" and "All-seeing" each correspond to a different aspect of Allāh's Essence?

There are four kinds of *tawhīd*.

The answer is a resounding, "No!" Allāh's *tanzīh* absolutely precludes Allāh having any aspects at all. Since a concept of a given thing corresponds to a particular aspect of that thing, and since Allāh has no aspects, there can be no concepts of Allāh. Again:

Everything which you all discriminate in your minds, in its most profound meanings, is a created thing like yourselves and is reverted back to you.

Concepts are creations and can only point to creations or to aspects of creations. They cannot really correspond to Allāh. On this point Imām 'Alī said,

Implements can only define themselves; and instruments point to their matches.

A screwdriver will only work for matching screws, and a pair of pliers can only work on matching bolts. Similarly, concepts can only work on objects of human experience, be they rational (like numbers), spiritual, psychological, or material. Allāh is none of these things and no concept can correspond to Him.

Yet human propositional knowledge (as opposed to *ma'rifah* and cognizance) is essentially conceptual. That is, we know things through concepts. Yet there are no concepts of Allāh. This leads us to the important principle of Islamic cosmology: *Allāh is propositionally unknowable in His Essence*. There can be no true propositional knowledge about the Essence of Allāh *per se*. Whatever we understand from the divine names is restricted to just that: our own limited understanding. This propositional unknowability of Allāh is an important aspect of *tanzīh*. END OF PHILOSOPHICAL POINT.

Thus the names of Allāh each name the same Allāh, but what we understand from those names is not Allāh *per se*, and Allāh has no aspects. When we adore and serve Allāh, this aspect of *tanzīh* must be kept in mind. Imām Ṣādiq narrates the following *ḥadīth*:

The name is different from that which is named. So whoever adores and serves the name in lieu of the One Intended has

For *kufri*, see 157, Principle 2.7. In this case, "*kufri*" means "denial of Allāh". For *shirk* and polytheism, see below (Sub-principle 4.3.8).

done kufr; and has not adored and served anything. And whoever adores and serves the name along with the One Intended has done shirk (polytheism). And whoever adores and serves the One Intended in lieu of the name: That is tawhid.

Ch

Although we cannot understand the Essence of Allāh through His names or the concepts we understand from them, we can understand from a given name some aspect of Allāh's Universal 'Walāyah and activity. Recall the *ḥadīth*:

Allāh, mighty and majestic, is and always was our Cherisher and Lord: Knowledge is His Essence and there is no object of knowledge; Hearing is His Essence and there is no object heard; Seeing is His Essence, and there is no object seen; Power is His Essence and there is no object over which power may be exerted. Once He originated things and the object of knowledge came to be, then knowledge from Him fell upon the object of knowledge, hearing [from Him fell] upon the object heard, vision [from Him fell] upon the object seen; and power [from Him fell] upon that over which power may be exerted.

Knowledge from Him, hearing from Him, vision from Him, and power from Him are all things we can directly experience and feel through our interaction with His signs and manifestations. The multiple concepts we derive from the divine names each correspond to an aspect of His created Universal 'Walāyah, His created Mercy, Cherishing, and Lordship which encompass all creation:

...and My Mercy encompasses each and every thing...
[7:156]

There! all walāyah to Allāh the Real. [18:44]

Through meditation upon the signs in the macrocosm and microcosm we may understand something of the meaning of 'Creator', with respect to that Mercy which is Universal 'Walāyah; we may understand something of the meaning of 'Provider', with respect to Universal 'Walāyah.

There are four kinds of tawhid.



Recall that Allāh has two proper names: 'Allāh' and 'Al-Raḥmān'.

Say [O Prophet]: Call out to Allāh, or call out to Al-Raḥmān; however you call out to him, He has the most beautiful names. [17:110]

4

The difference between the two is as follows: The name 'Allāh' is used to mention the Essence of Allāh with respect to the *tanzih* of the Essence, the essential *walāyah* of the Essence, and the activity of the Essence. That is, the name 'Allāh' is the most comprehensive of the divine names: it encompasses the attributes of *tanzih*, of essential *walāyah*, and of voluntary *walāyah*.

'Al-Raḥmān', on the other hand, is used to mention the Essence of Allāh with respect to Its essential *walāyah* and with respect to Its activity; it is not used with respect to the *tanzih* of the essence. That is, the name 'Al-Raḥmān' encompasses all the attributes of essential *walāyah* and of voluntary *walāyah*.

Recall the explanation of the name of Allāh in terms of *walāyah*:

(He) enveloped in walāyah that which is minute and subtle and that which is grand and momentous.

The implicit pronoun 'He' points to *tanzih*; 'enveloped in *walāyah*' points to both essential *walāyah* and to voluntary *walāyah*. Allāh refers to this enveloping *walāyah* as *My Mercy*:

...and My Mercy encompasses each and every thing.
[7:156]

Note that the name 'Al-Raḥmān' is derived from '*rahmah*' ('mercy'). The *āyah*, *My Mercy encompasses each and every thing...* embraces exactly both essential and voluntary *walāyah*. This is the scope of the name 'Al-Raḥmān'.

The name 'Allāh' encompasses everything that *My Mercy* encompasses, with the addition of the attributes of *tanzih*. This is most appropriately symbolized by the implicit pronoun 'He' – which points to *tanzih* – plus the verb 'enveloped in *walāyah*', which is synonymous with '*My Mercy encompasses*'.

Because both 'Allāh' and 'Al-Rahmān' embrace all the attributes of essential *walāyah*, and because essential *walāyah* is absolutely unique to the Essence of Allāh, it is not allowed to name anyone 'Allāh' or 'Al-Rahmān'. Virtually all of the other names may, in some context, be applied to other-than-Allāh. A person may be *powerful (qadir)* in some relative context. Someone else may be *visionary (baṣir)* in a relative context. The names 'Allāh' and 'Al-Rahmān', on the other hand, have only a single context: The Essence of Allāh and the *walāyah* that envelops all things.



The names of Allāh are not limited to specifically enunciated Arabic expressions, or even expressions from other languages. Even deep breathing or sighing constitutes a name of Allāh by which He may be addressed. Imām Ṣādiq narrates,

Surely 'Aah!' is a name from the names of Allāh: 'Whoever says, "Aah!" has thereby sought the help of Allāh, magnified and exalted.

'Aah!' a deep sigh or breath expressed when one is in difficulty or distress.



Beyond expressions enunciated by the tongue and deep breathing directed towards Allāh, the divine names constitute cosmological principles within which lie the entire field of creation. Indeed: The entire creation and everything within it is a name of Allāh. There is a beautiful but very difficult *ḥadīth* narrated by Imām Ṣādiq which describes the entirety of creation, its foundations, and the activity that produced it all as constituting certain names of Allāh. This *ḥadīth*, the *Ḥadīth of the Origination of Names (Ḥadīth al-Ḥudūth al-Asmā')*, is difficult and requires a lot by way of commentary; hence we will not reproduce it here. Indeed, the topic of the cosmos-as-name is one of the more difficult topics in the science of the firm sign, and beyond our present scope.

4-3-7 *Tawḥīd of 'ʿIbādah and 'ʿUbūdiyyah: Only Allāh may be adored, served, and worshipped.*

The first three kinds of *tawḥīd* pertain to the Essence and Action of Allāh. They pertain to His Reality and to the *walāyah* and *rubūbiyyah* projected by that Reality, independent of the attitude and response of His creation to the gift of His *walāyah*. Put another way: The existence of Allāh and the *walāyah* that He projects is a matter that does not depend on what we do or do not do, what we cognize or what we do not cognize. According to Islām: Whether or not we cognize Him, Allāh does exist in all His *aḥad*-ness and *ṣamad*-ness (and no other being shares in His *aḥad*-ness and *ṣamad*-ness). Whether or not we recognize Him, He sees, hears, knows and has power over each and every thing (and no other being shares these essential attributes); whether or not we acknowledge Him, He cherishes and provides for us through His creation, providence, giving of life, and giving of death (and no other being shares these voluntary attributes).

From creation, Allāh asks for only one thing: the acknowledgement, recognition, and cognizance of His Reality, His essential *walāyah* over all (power and perception), and His voluntary *walāyah* over all (cherishing, lordship, and mercy). For example:

And [Jesus said:] Surely Allāh is my Cherisher-Lord and your Cherisher Lord: so adore and serve Him (do 'ubūdiyyah unto Him)! This is a straight way. [19:36]

Praise to Allāh, Cherisher and Lord of the worlds:

...

Thee alone do we adore and serve, and from Thee do we seek help.

Say [O Prophet]:... It has been revealed to me that your deity/supreme source of walāyah is one deity/supreme source of walāyah. So whoso comes to place hope in the meeting with his Cherisher-Lord: Let him work deeds of righteousness and let him not associate the adoration-service of his Cherisher-Lord with anyone! [18:110]

A common thread running through these and similar *āyāt* is that the *'ubūdiyyah* or adoration and service of Allāh is a direct response to Allāh's *rubūbiyyah* or Cherishing-Lordship. Consider

Jesus' words: *Surely Allāh is my Cherisher-Lord and your Cherisher Lord: so adore and serve Him*. The very fact of Allāh's Cherishing and Lordship demands a response, indicated by the conjunction 'fa' ('so') in '*so adore and serve Him*'. In general terms, Jesus is saying, "This Cherishing-Lordship is a reality, so respond accordingly!"

In response, we are to return *walāyah* to that One Reality that projects its own *walāyah* over all of us, the *walāyah* that is given (*rubūbiyyah*). And that return of *walāyah* to its Source is done through 'ibādah and 'ubūdiyyah, through adoration and service. The first acknowledgement of the *walāyah* that is given by Allāh is accomplished through meditation upon His signs, followed by gratitude and praise:

...Allāh makes clear His signs for you; perhaps you will be thankful. [5:89]

He made for you hearing, vision, and the fu'ād: perhaps you will be thankful. [16:78]

Be dynamically aware of Allāh; perhaps you will be thankful. [3:123]

And from His Mercy He made for you the night and the day: you may seek repose therein, and seek the favors of your Cherisher-Lord; perhaps you will be thankful. [28:73]

Following that acknowledgement and gratitude – a gratitude that places us in some degree of communion and harmony with Allāh and His *walāyah* – we may seek out His assistance, help, and guidance:

Praise to Allāh, Cherisher and Lord of the worlds:

...

Thee alone do we adore and serve, and from Thee do we seek help.

Show us the Straight Path. [1:2, 5-6]

This Straight Path is the path of the *tawhīd* of 'ubūdiyyah and 'ibādah, the *tawhīd* of adoration and service of Allāh. This *tawhīd*

There are four kinds of *tawhīd*.

is not something to merely believe in; it is something that creation does in response to the *rubūbiyyah* of Allāh. As something to do, it involves every aspect of the being and existence of the adorer-servant.

Put another way: *The path of the tawhīd of 'ubūdiyyah is the path of placing one's body, soul, spirit, and innermost heart (fu'ād) in harmony with the rubūbiyyah of Allāh*. That is: it is the returning of *walāyah* to Allāh by means of placing every aspect of oneself in harmony with the *walāyah* that comes from and is given by Allāh, and which embraces every aspect of the human being. Since the *walāyah* of Allāh embraces every aspect of the human being, it follows that every aspect of the human being must be involved in the response to that *walāyah*.

Recall the definition of Islām given in the last chapter: *Islām is the dīn (or way) of positive walāyah (or dynamic loving) returned in response to the walāyah of Allāh given to creation*. We can now put this a new way: *Islām is the dīn of returning ultimate walāyah and 'ubūdiyyah to Allāh and to Allāh alone, in response to the infinite walāyah and rubūbiyyah of Allāh given to creation*. Put another way: *Islām is the dīn of the tawhīd of 'ubūdiyyah*. Doing the *tawhīd* of 'ubūdiyyah is Islām.



Recall this āyah:

Say [O Prophet]: I only exhort you to one thing: that you stand for Allāh – in pairs of two or alone – and moreover that you reflectively meditate! [34:46]

The *one thing*, according to Imām 'Alī in the course of a long *hadith*, is doing *walāyah*. To do this *walāyah* involves standing for Allāh and engaging in reflective meditation. Standing for Allāh is establishing manifest justice:

Allāh has witnessed that there is no ultimate source of walāyah except for Him; so have the angels and those who have knowledge, standing through justice...

Surely the dīn unto Allāh is Islām. [3:18-19]

...the fu'ād: This is a faculty of mystical vision that lies in the inner core of the heart. See Sub-Principle 2.5.5.

Ch

O you who have dynamically believed! Be those who stand for Allāh, witnesses to manifest justice. And do not allow some hatred of a people to afflict you so that you do not act justly. Be just! It is closer to awareness. And be aware of Allāh! Surely Allāh is well-informed of all that you do. [5:8]

Standing for justice and engaging in reflective meditation upon the signs of Allāh: These are the most fundamental activities of *‘ubūdiyyah*, of returning *walāyah* to Allāh. Indeed, these two are the foundation of the activity of Islām. In the sequel to this book (1SP), on the *just duty*, we will unfold in more detail various aspects of the path of developing harmony with the *walāyah* of Allāh.

4.3.8 The opposite of *tawhīd* is *shirk*.

A corollary of the above points is as follows: *Ultimate walāyah, which is ‘ubūdiyyah or adoration and service, is to be returned only to Allāh and to no one else at all.* That is, one must not associate anyone with the ultimate *walāyah* due to Allāh. Yes, the world is built upon and governed through a multitude of *walāyah*-relationships: The sun and the earth, the earth and the moon, a mother and son, a father and daughter, a prophet of Allāh and the people to whom he is sent, a leader and follower, among innumerable others. But the key point to remember at all times is that each of these *walāyah* relationships is a *relative walāyah*-relationship, not an *absolute* one. A Muslim mother loves her son, but recognizes him as a gift that flows from the *walāyah* of Allāh. The son is not an absolute object of the mother's affection: If her son commits an injustice she will stand for the right of the victim, even if it means that her son will face punishment:

O you who have dynamically believed! Be those who stand for manifest justice, witnesses to Allāh, even if it be against your yourselves, your parents, or those who are close to you; even if it be against someone poor or rich, for Allāh has more walāyah [than anyone else] with both of them. And do not follow your personal whims and

desires and let them prevent you from being just. And if you deviate or turn away from justice, then surely Allāh is well-informed of all that you do. [4:135]

To be unjust is to give ultimate *walāyah* to something or someone other than Allāh, be it a relative, a friend, an organization, a corporation, a nation or national flag, or any linguistic, ethnic or tribal affiliation. When one gives ultimate *walāyah* to any limited aspect of the universe, cosmos or world, one thereby cuts off oneself from an infinite spectrum of the *walāyah* that pervades the universe.

To explain: The *walāyah* of Allāh is infinite. According to mathematics,

$$\infty \pm \text{any number} = \infty$$

That is, if you add any number, no matter how large, to infinity you get infinity. Similarly, if you subtract any number, no matter how large, from infinity you get infinity. When one makes some limited object an ultimate focal point of *walāyah*, one thereby cuts oneself off from the rest of *walāyah*, which is infinite. That is, one cuts oneself off from infinity.

When a mother makes her son the ultimate focus of her *walāyah*, she actively or passively supports the evil he commits against others, thereby cutting herself off from an infinite field of *walāyah* that embraces everything other than her son.

When she shields her son from justice, she perpetrates even more injustice against the victim, who is a part of the field of the *walāyah* of Allāh. To reject that victim is to reject the *walāyah* of Allāh. And to reject the *walāyah* of Allāh is to reject all *walāyah*, for Allāh is an Infinite-Singularity (*Samad*) whose projection of *walāyah* in creation is infinite.

When someone says, "My country, right or wrong," – that is, when one makes allegiance to one's nation or flag an ultimate focal point of *walāyah* – one cuts oneself off from the infinite field of *walāyah* that lies outside the infinitely small field to which one pays allegiance. His country may kill innocents, destroy the environment, or perpetrate all manner of evil, but his ultimate allegiance is to his country: he supports it in good and he supports it in evil.

To place ultimate *walāyah* in any limited field of existence, reality or fantasy is an act of *shirk* (associating partners) with Allāh.

Of course, it is the duty of the mother to make sure that, in enforcing the rights of her son's victim, that no injustice is done to her son in the process. Such looking out for her son is part of her *walāyah*-relationship with her, and falls under returning *walāyah* to Allāh, for

Surely Allāh commands to justice and acting beautifully... [16:90]

On one level of understanding, *shirk* is very similar to polytheism: a belief in multiple sources of ultimate *walāyah*. *Shirk*, however, is much deeper than mere belief or faith. It is the engagement of one's faculties of body, soul, spirit, and innermost heart in the ultimate 'ubūdiyyah or adoration and service of anything, real or imagined, other than Allāh.

Ch



Shirk is of two kinds:

1 *Focused adoration and service*

This kind of *shirk* involves placing, consciously or subconsciously, some object as a focal point of adoration, service or worship. Paganism and idol-worship fall into this category:

In lieu of Allāh, they ultimately adore and serve that which will neither harm them nor benefit them. And they say, "These are our intercessors unto Allāh." Say [O Prophet]: 'Will you inform Allāh about that which He does not know⁴ in the heavens or in the earth? Glorified and exalted is He above and against the shirk that they do! [10:18]

Sometimes idols or what they represent are worshipped in conjunction with acknowledgement of a higher power or ultimate god: this is common in most schools of Hinduism for example. One may adore and serve idols, or one may adore and serve what they represent: natural forces, inner passions and desires, etc. One fears the sea, and so creates a sea god, perhaps representing him with an image. One wants to achieve erotic or romantic desires, and so creates a goddess of love upon whom one calls for fulfilment of one's desires and to bend some other person towards oneself. A king or warrior wants to achieve victory over his enemies, and sets up a deity to whom he can address his need, regardless of whether his cause is just.

Through each "god" one cuts out a sphere of human existence, sets it up as an independent reality, then treats it as such. But it is all a lie:

In lieu of Allāh, you ultimately adore and serve idols; but you create a lie. That which you adore and serve in lieu of Allāh are not capable of providing you with anything. So seek your provision through Allāh: Adore and serve Him, and be grateful to Him! To Him shall you be returned. [29:17]

4

That is, the gods, deities, powers, and demigods you set up in correspondence to your fears and desires are each and all a fantasy; only Allāh can provide for you so direct your attention to Him alone, acknowledge His favors, and show gratitude. In any case, you will be returned to Him, whether you acknowledge Him or not.

It is very important to distinguish ritual from inner attitude. In adoration and service of something, it does not matter whether there is ritual involved. One may outwardly engage in ritual adoration, service, and worship, but in one's heart one has absolutely no allegiance to the objects of ritual. Similarly, one may have an attitude of adoration, service, and worship of something with no accompanying ritual.

Today, in a largely agnostic society, *shirk* is just as rampant as it was centuries ago. The difference is that accompanying the various material and spiritual forces that we worship there is little by way of formalized ritual. We worship things like wealth, erotic fulfilment, power, scientific achievement, the flag and boundaries of the nation state in which we happen to live, among other things. Indeed, we worship these just as surely as the pagans of old worshipped their idols, perhaps even more intensely. Allāh says in the Qur'ān,

Have you seen the one who takes his own passions and inclinations as his deity/ultimate source of walāyah? [25:43]

Who has gone further astray than the one who obediently follows his own passions and inclinations? [28:50]

Here the following of passions and inclinations is considered as one of the worst forms of *shirk*, yet there are neither formalized ritual nor idols involved.

⁴ SUBTLETY: 'Will you inform Allāh about that which He does not know: Allāh knows everything, and He does not know of any partner to His *tanzīh*, essential *walāyah*, or voluntary *walāyah*. To those who acknowledge Allāh's supremacy and still ultimately adore and serve other deities: do you know something that Allāh does not know? Namely, that there are partners in His ultimate *walāyah*? If Allāh does not know it, then it cannot exist at all, for every relative reality flows from Allāh's knowledge.

One must never confuse the representation of a thing with the thing itself. In this case, one must not confuse a formal ritual that represents the adoration, service, and worship of some object with the actual adoration, service, and worship of that object.

Ch

Sometimes, though, there is a subtle ritual involved in *shirk*. For example: Nationalism involves the adoration, service, and worship of one's nation. The pledging of allegiance to its flag is a kind of ritual of *shirk*, through which one declares ultimate *walāyah* to the state with respect to the political aspect of life. The tolling of the bell every business morning on Wall Street symbolizes the adoration, service, and worship of wealth and its accumulation; there, one declares ultimate *walāyah*, with respect to one's providence and perhaps even happiness, to wealth and its accumulation. Perhaps on Friday (Muslims), Saturday (Jews) or Sunday (Christians), one pledges allegiance to Allāh/Hashem/God for some of one's spiritual needs. Our lives are divided into many compartments, in each of which we pledge allegiance, consciously or subconsciously, to some presumed ultimate source of *walāyah*.

2 Obedience

Sometimes one does not consciously worship a given thing as a presumed ultimate source of *walāyah*. On the other hand, willing or willful obedience to any person or institution which is not in harmony with the *walāyah* of Allāh constitutes a kind of *shirk*. According to a *ḥadīth*, narrated by Imām Ṣādiq:

'Whoever (wilfully) obeys a man in an act of disobedience to Allāh has thereby adored and served him.

In the Qur'ān we read:

'They took their priests and rabbis as lords in lieu of Allāh. [9:31]

About this Imām Ṣādiq narrates

'Indeed, by Allāh! They did not call their people to the adoration, service, and worship of themselves. If they

There are four kinds of *tawḥīd*.

had called them to the adoration, service, and worship of themselves their people would not have responded to them. Rather: They made permissible what was forbidden, and forbade what was permissible. So their people adored and served them without realizing it.

4

The exhortations against *shirk* in the Qur'ān and traditions are innumerable. It is no exaggeration to say that the activity of Islām is the struggle against *shirk*, be it the *shirk* of focused adoration and service or the *shirk* of obeying people and institutions that are out of harmony with the *walāyah* of Allāh. A famous tradition of the Prophet says,

Shirk is more subtle than the creeping of an ant on a black stone during a night of complete darkness.

And the Qur'ān says,

And most of them are not dynamically believing in Allāh except that they are also still associating partners with Him. [12:106]

We will say more about *shirk* under *ISP*, Subprinciple 2.4.4, where we discuss *dynamic awareness* (*taqwā*) and the *operationalization* of *tawḥīd*.



The expression 'act of disobedience' translates 'mu'īyah'. A *mu'īyah* is actually any act that is in disharmony with the *walāyah* of Allāh. The opposite of *mu'īyah* is *ta'āh* (act of obedience), an act which is in harmony with the *walāyah* of Allāh.

5 Cognizance of the Origin

5.1 *Allāh is the origin of all becoming and motion.*

THE WORLD – that is, everything other than Allāh, including the realms of the abstract (like numbers), spiritual, psychological, or material – is a creation of Allāh. Furthermore, the existence of the world and everything within it is maintained by Allāh. That is, Allāh is both the creator and the maintainer of the world. We read in the Qurʾān:

Say [O Prophet]: Have you seen your partners whom you call upon in lieu of Allāh? Show me what they have created in the earth? Or do they have a share (shirk) in the creation of the heavens?...

Allāh keeps the heavens and the earth from perishing. And if they were to perish, no one else besides Him could keep them from doing so... [35:40–41]

Among the cosmological questions one may ask, “How did Allāh create the world?”; “How does Allāh maintain the world?” The Qurʾān and the traditions of the Prophet, particularly those transmitted by his Family, contain a wealth of information about these cosmological matters. The Qurʾān, however, does not place all the details in one place. Rather, the Qurʾān, as it does with most topics, takes a *non-linear*⁶ approach, forcing the reader to contemplate and put the pieces together.

In what follows, we will give a partial outline of the cosmological process of creation based on the data given in the Qurʾān and tradition. The exact details of how this outline is put together is beyond our scope, although we will mention some of the relevant *āyāt* and traditions. The following is an introductory account and leaves out many caveats and subtle details. Still, it is a difficult discussion in a number of places, and many of the *ahādīth* we will mention here, while authentic, were traditionally restricted to very select circles amongst the Companions, the Family of the Prophet, and their students.

⁶ By ‘non-linear approach’, we mean a development of ideas and themes that is either not actually or apparently step-by-step or sequential. The main themes of the Qurʾān may be found interspersed throughout the text in various contexts. Understanding a given *āyah* requires contemplation of another *āyah*, which may make reference to a point expounded more fully in yet another *āyah*, whose understanding requires reference to the original given *āyah*, and so forth. The tight yet harmonious interweaving of topics in the Qurʾān is a reflection of the interconnectedness of all things in the field of *walāyah*. Human existence, nay, creation as a whole, cannot be ultimately compartmentalized: *Neither your creation nor your being sent forth is like anything other than a single soul... [31:28]*

5.1.1 The secret of creation lies in the process of the *Mashi'ah*.

The entire process of creation has been summed up in the following *āyah*:

And your Cherisher-Lord creates what He wishes ...
[28:82]

Surely His commanding is such that, when He desires a thing, He just says to it, "Become!" and it becomes.
[36:82]

Indeed! To Him the Commanding and the Creation!
[7:54]

The first *āyah* describes the process of creation in terms of wishing (*mashi'ah*); the second *āyah* describes it in terms of desiring (*irādah*); both the second and the third use the word 'commanding' ('*amr*') to describe this process, and use 'creation' to describe the outcome of this process. The word 'commanding' ('*amr*') is synonymous with the imperative 'become!' ('*kun!*'); the expression 'creation' ('*khalq*') is synonymous with the verb 'becomes' ('*yakūn*').

The second *āyah* uses the expression '*says*' to describe the process: Allāh's creative process may be symbolized by speech. Thus the Qur'ān and the traditions of the Prophet often refer to the creative process as a word of Allāh.

The words '*mashi'ah*' and '*irādah*' are basically synonymous: Each may be used to mention the full process of the activity whose outcome is a created thing. When used to refer to the stages of the Divine Action there is a slight difference between them which we will explain below.

The second *āyah* in particular is more subtle than it appears at first sight. Let us make a couple of points: First, consider the expression '*desires a thing*'. The word '*shay*' ('thing') comes from the same root as '*mashi'ah*', and '*shay*' actually means "the outcome of a *mashi'ah*". Imām 'Alī says in a speech,

Allāh is the 'Producer of the thing when there was no thing, since the thing (shay') comes about from His Mashi'ah.

Allāh is the 'origin of all becoming and motion.

So the expression '*desires a thing*' means "desires the production of something from His *Mashi'ah*". This points to a difference between '*mashi'ah*' and '*irādah*' to which we will return.

Based on the relation between '*mashi'ah*' and '*shay*' ('thing') we can appreciate one of the subtleties of the *ḥadīth* mentioned earlier (page 123):

Allāh created the 'Wish (Mashi'ah) through itself. Then He created the things through the 'Wish.

A second subtlety in Q 36:82 involves the expression, "*Become!*" and it becomes. The words 'become' and 'becomes' derive from the Arabic verb '*kāna*'. Virtually every translation of the Qur'ān translates '*kāna*' as 'to be'. So the second *āyah* is translated as '*He just says to it, "Be!" and it is*'. The problem is that, in pre-Classical and even Classical Arabic, the verb '*kāna*' is not identical to the verb 'to be'. Furthermore, there is no equivalent to the verb 'to be': There is no 'is' in Arabic.

The verb '*kāna*' actually means "to come about", "to come into reality", or simply "to become". This brings us to another subtlety: The *āyah* does not say,

He just says, "Become!" and it becomes.

but rather

He just says to it, "Become!" and it becomes.

The subtlety is in the expression '*says to it*'. What is this *it* which is being called upon to become or to come into external reality? The answer lies in another *āyah*:

'Did there not come upon the human being a period of the Aeon in which he was not a thing brought to presence?'
[76:1]

A number of *ahādīth* explain this enigmatic *āyah*. Imām Bāqir and Imām Ṣadiq narrate the following:

He (the human being) was called to presence in knowledge but was not called to presence in creation.

One proof that '*kāna*' does not mean "to be" lies in the fact that the early translators of Greek works into Arabic never translated 'to be' - Greek for 'to be' - with '*kāna*'. Rather, they used '*kāna*' to translate the Greek notion of 'becoming', 'generation', or 'coming into existence'. The lack of an equivalent to the verb 'to be' - also called 'the copula' - in Arabic was a particularly vexing problem for the early translators.

A PHILOSOPHICAL POINT: To translate the relevant portion of the *āyah* under discussion as "*Be!*" and *it is* will raise serious logical and metaphysical objections. How can Allāh say to a given *it*, "*Be!*" unless it is already *it*? The fact of the matter is that Allāh is not saying, "*Be!*" but rather, "*Become!*".

His was determined in structure but was not yet caused to become.

Thus there are at least two kinds of existence: existence in knowledge and existence in becoming or coming about. Recall the *ḥadīth* mentioned earlier:

...Once He originated things and the object of knowledge came to be, then knowledge from Him fell upon the object of knowledge....

The knowledge from Him is the initial creative knowledge concomitant with Allāh's *Mashī'ah* and *Trādah*:

The one who desires cannot be unless that which is desired is with him. Allāh always was and is Knowing and Powerful; then He desired.

The act of wishing or desiring has a necessary condition: namely, that the object wished or desired has some form of existence. In a human being, one formulates an image or conception of what one wants, then goes about turning it into reality. In the case of Allāh there is no conceptualizing or thinking. Rather, the objects of knowledge are created from within the very *Mashī'ah* of Allāh before anything else; they constitute the first stage of the *Mashī'ah*. Everything in the world, every creation, begins first as an object of created knowledge in the *Mashī'ah*. When Allāh wishes and desires something, it is an object of created knowledge that is wished and desired. Once that object comes about as an outcome of the *Mashī'ah*, it becomes an actualized created entity.

Thus the *it* referred to in, *He just says to it, "Become!" and it becomes*, is an object in Allāh's primordial created knowledge. It is that object which is addressed and which responds by coming into external reality.

Let us recap what we have learned up to now: The world – that which is other than Allāh – contains two kinds of object:

- 1 Allāh's *Mashī'ah* or Divine Wish: This is the Action of Allāh; or
- 2 the outcomes of Allāh's *Mashī'ah*: This is the Creation of Allāh.

Allāh's *Mashī'ah* contains the origins of all things as objects of knowledge, and it is upon these that the *Mashī'ah* operates.



Recall the *ḥadīth*:

Allāh created the 'Wish (Mashī'ah) through itself. Then He created the things through the 'Wish.

One of the mysteries of the *Mashī'ah* is that it is created through itself. What this means is that Allāh did not wish or desire the *Mashī'ah* before creating the *Mashī'ah*. Otherwise, the wish to create the Wish would need to be wished, and that wish would need yet another wish, and so forth.

A symbol of the wish is provided by human intention: When you intend to do something, you do not intend the intention to do something; you just intend the action. In a sense, the intention is intended through that very intention, not through another intention.



Now we will say more about the stages of the *Mashī'ah*. Note that the *Mashī'ah* and the knowledge it contains is an *unseen mystery (ghayb)*. This is a mystery that even the Prophet of Islām and the other prophets and *awliya'* of Allāh cannot fully fathom. As the Mystery, it is the *Treasured, Hidden Name (Ism Maknūn Makhzūn)* of Allāh, as Imām Ṣādiq narrates in the *Ḥadīth* of the Origination of Names; it is the *Name* that is firmly fixed in its own shadow:

To Him belongs the keys to the Mystery; no one knows them except Him. [6:59]

Say [O Prophet]: I do not claim to have the treasures of Allāh, nor do I know the Mystery... [6:50]

As we discuss the stages of the Mystery – as taught by the Prophet to his closet companions and to his Family – keep in mind that language falls severely short here. The Mystery is beyond any and

This is just a symbol; a deeper discussion of what it means that Allāh created the *Mashī'ah* through itself is far beyond our scope here and involves many metaphysical and phenomenological preliminaries.

all conceptual or intellectual understanding; indeed, rationality and intellect are created through it. It is beyond time as we know it; indeed, time as we know it was created through it. Yet, it is a *dynamic process*, an engine at the heart of Universal 'Walāyah; it is a process outside of physical time. Finally, it is the Mercy that encompasses each and every thing (*shay'*), each and every outcome of the *Mashi'ah*; it is Pure Absolute 'Walāyah itself and envelops everything, no matter how small or mighty.

The six stages of the Mystery and *Mashi'ah* have been described in many *ahādith*; the following *hadith* narrated by the Family of the Prophet is one of the most comprehensive:

He [Allāh] knows ('ilm), wishes (mashi'ah), desires (irādah), determines (taqdīr), decides (qadā'), and fulfils (imda'). So He fulfils what He decides; He decides what He determines, and he determines what He desires.

So through His knowledge the wish comes about; through His wish the desire comes about; through the desire the determination comes about; through the determination the decision comes about; through the decision the fulfilment comes about.

Knowledge precedes the wish; the wish is second; the desire is third; and the determination falls upon the decision through its fulfilment.

Thus the *Mashi'ah* as a whole is composed of these six stages. Let us say something about each:

1 'Ilm (Knowledge)

We have already discussed this above. This is the mysterious knowledge that contains all possibilities and potentialities. Everything that exists is an actualization of this ultimate veil of the Divine Essence;

2 Mashi'ah ('Wish)

When the *mashi'ah* falls upon a mode of the mysterious knowledge, that mode acquires presence (*dhikr*). According to one

hadith, it is the *first presence*. That is, it is the first stage of existence of a thing beyond the mystery of mysteries. Another *hadith* describes this substage as the *beginning of the Action*. That is, the *mashi'ah* is the first substage of Allāh's Action;

3 Irādah ('Desire)

The *irādah* has been described in the *ahādith* as the *resolution* ('*azimah*') to carry out what is wished. Interestingly, this description of *irādah* is closely approximated by the distinction in English between 'wish' and 'desire'; the word 'desire' certainly has stronger connotations;

4 Taqdīr or Qadar ('Determination)

According to the *ahādith*, the stage of *taqdīr* or *qadar* involves the giving of *structure* (*handasah*) to the becoming thing. This structure includes what we normally understand by the word 'structure' including height, depth, shape, and general quantity and quality. The structure of a thing also includes hidden and secret aspects such as its general *term of life* (*ajal*), a book⁴ in which every detail concerning its existence and action will be written, and a permission to subsist and perdure. We say, "general term of life," and so forth, because these structural features carry some flexibility depending on the actions of the thing (especially in the case of a human being, whose power and scope of choice is particularly vast).

These three – term, book, and permission are often referred to in the Qur'ān. It is a firm part of Islāmic cosmology that Allāh determines how long we will live, that everything we do is in some sense "written" in a book, and that we can do nothing, good or bad, without His permission. What the *ahādith* tell us is that each of these things is an essential structural feature of one's very reality and not something separate from oneself.

The following *hadith* narrated by Imām Ṣādiq mentions some of these hidden structural features of a thing:

Not a thing in the earth or in the firmament comes about except through seven features: through a wish, a desire, a determination, a decision, a permission, a book, and a term.

There is one faculty that comes close to penetrating at least the borders of the Mystery of the *Mashi'ah*. That is the *fu'ād*, the inner core of the heart. See the heading *Haqq al-Yağm* (TSP, page 107).

When used to mention the Mystery or *Mashi'ah* as a whole, the word '*mashi'ah*' is capitalized. When used to mention just one of its stages, then '*mashi'ah*' is not capitalized.

With respect to the Action, the stage of knowledge is not a stage of Action per se, but is rather a pre-condition of Action. Similarly, the fulfilment (*imda'*) is not really a separate stage from the fulfilment. Thus the Action actually has four stages: wish (*mashi'ah*), desire (*irādah*), determination (*taqdīr*), and decision (*qadā'*). Knowledge ('ilm) is actually a pre-condition of Action and the fulfilment (*imda'*) follows immediately upon the decision, as explained below.

⁴ The book that is part of the structure of a thing may be likened to the trace that is left on a computer's hard drive from every single keystroke that is executed. Everything that the human being, or any other thing, does leaves a trace in the field of *walāyah*. This is like the light from stars which reach us after billions of years, or the background radiation of the Big Bang that astrophysicists can now apparently detect. The book of a given thing is thus a modality of its field of *walāyah* that captures every imprint and every vibration that emanates from that thing.

And in the Qur²an we read:

And there is not a thing (shay³) except that its treasures are with Us; We do not make it descend except through a known measure and determination. [15:21]

5 Qaḍā² ('Decision') & Imḍā² ('Fulfillment')

Decision and commitment are joint: When the decision is made, it is fulfilled. The *aḥādīth* compares the decision to the affixing of a seal to a contract. Once the seal is affixed the contract is immediately in effect and its provisions enforced. Similarly, once the decision (*qaḍā²*) is made it is fulfilled (*imḍā²*). Then the thing wished has come into external, concrete reality.

5.1.2 The first general outcome of the *Mashī²ah* is the water of life and *walāyah*.

We can consider the outcome of Allāh's acting from two aspects:

- 1 On the one hand, we may consider the entire world and everything within it as an outcome of the *Mashī²ah*.
- 2 On the other hand, we may consider each individual thing as an outcome of Allāh's *Mashī²ah*.

The first aspect is prior to the second because creation in its totality forms a continuous, seamless whole:

Neither your creation nor your being sent forth is like anything other than a single soul... [31:28]

You will not find in the creation of Al-Rahmān any disharmony or discontinuity. [67:3]

Hence whatever individual thing that comes into existence comes as a modality of the whole.

So what is the nature of the whole that underlies all of its parts? What is the first substance created upon which everything in creation depends? Put simply: What is the first thing (*shay³*) that Allāh created? That is: What is the first outcome of the *Mashī²ah*?

The best answer to this is given in the course of a wonderful *ḥadīth* narrated by Imām Bāqir. A scholar from Syria came to him and said,

I would like to ask you about the first [thing] that Allāh created from his creation. For someone I asked answered, "Fate." Someone else said, "The Pen." Yet someone else said, "The Spirit."

Imām Bāqir then said,

They have not said anything! I will inform you [narrating from my ancestors] that Allāh, magnified and exalted, was and there was nothing other than Him.... And the Creator was before the created. If the first of what He created were a thing (shay³) that came to be from another thing (shay³) then there would be no end [of things]. In that case Allāh would be such that some thing could exist such that Allāh does not precede it [since the chain of things would have no beginning]. But Allāh was when there is nothing other than Him.

And He created that [first] thing (shay³) which all things come from and that is the Water from which He created the things. So he made the lineage of each and every thing go back to the Water, and He did not give the Water any lineage at all.

The point that the first outcome of Allāh's *Mashī²ah* is the Water is supported by the Qur²an:

And from the Water we made everything alive. [21:30]

On the one hand, this *āyah* tells us that all living things are made of water. At a deeper level, the *āyah* is telling us that everything is alive and made of water. After all,

Neither your creation nor your being sent forth is like anything other than a single soul... [31:28]

The Pen: This is from the *āyah* *Nūn! By the Pen and what they inscribe.* [68:1] See the next Sub-principle, 5.1.3.

...then there would be no end: This is because an infinite chain of causes would ensue: one thing created from another thing, created from another thing, and so forth.

Keep in mind the precision of language used by Imām Bāqir. When he uses the words '*shay³*' ('thing') and '*khālq*' ('creation') he means "that which comes from Allāh's *Mashī²ah*."

The Pen, the Spirit, and so forth are each a delimited thing which must have come from some other thing. The Water, on the other hand, is formless and structure-less in and of itself. Hence the Water "has no lineage."

...measure and determination: That is, a known *qadar*. Note the description in this *āyah* of the thing (a) is something sent down. A thing descends through the stages of the *Mashī²ah* and beyond until it reaches this immediately visible world.

There is not a single thing except that it glorifies through praising Him, but you all do not understand their glorification. [17:44]

On the one hand, the world as a whole is as a single, living soul. On the other hand, every single *thing* (*shayʾ*) without exception participates on some level in the glorification and praise of Allāh. Glorifying and praising are features of living things, so every *thing* (*shayʾ*), every outcome of the *Mashiʾah*, is actually alive. Of course this life and intelligence that pervades all things is not the same as human life and intelligence, but something much deeper and more subtle. After all, **you all do not understand their glorification**. Rather, human life and intelligence is a symbol of the life and intelligence that pervades the whole and each of its parts. Similarly, the Water from which everything is created is not H₂O. Rather, H₂O is a symbol of the Water that grounds the whole and each of its parts. For in water you will not find **any disharmony or discontinuity**. It is completely transparent and formless.

In pre-Classical Arabic the word '*māʾ*' ('water') is used to name more than just H₂O. It is also used to refer to juice, sap from trees and other plants, and other fluids. Thus we may say that the Water of creation is a fluid. At this point modern physics can help us. The equations of motion for a fluid – signifying the rules governing the movement of water and other fluids – are governed by something called "fluid dynamics." The laws governing the physical universe as a whole – including gravitation, electricity, magnetism, and other forces of nature – are governed by something called "field dynamics." Now it so happens that field dynamics is a generalization of fluid dynamics. That is, the laws governing the field of matter that grounds the physical universe are modelled upon the laws that govern fluids.

Thus, just as a fluid is a generalization of water, a field is a generalization of a fluid. In the spirit of the pre-Classical Arabic upon which the Qurʾān is based, we may say that the Water of primordial creation is none other than a general field that grounds all of the outcomes of the *Mashiʾah*. The Water is thus the Cosmic Field.

This Water, this Field, is nothing other than *walāyah* sent down:

Allāh is the origin of all becoming and motion..

Observe and contemplate the imprints of the Mercy of Allāh, how He gives life to the earth after its death. [30:50]

And Allāh sends down the water from the sky, thereby giving life to the earth after its death [16:65]

From contemplation upon the above two *āyāt* the following is clear:

- 1 Water is the principle of life;
- 2 The *Mercy of Allāh* is the principle of water;
- 3 Water is that which *Allāh sends down* from His Mercy;
- 4 Water constitutes the very *imprints of the Mercy of Allāh*.

NOTE: Q 16:65 is the only *āyah* in the entire Qurʾān that mentions the *imprints* (*athār*) of Allāh, and here they are associated with His Mercy. We have already explained more than once that 'Mercy' is a specific expression that names Universal *Walāyah*. The *imprints of the Mercy of Allāh* are nothing other than the imprints of Universal *Walāyah*. And these imprints constitute nothing other than the Water that is sent down from the *Mashiʾah*. This is symbolized by water coming down from the sky. When the water reaches the earth, it brings it to life, producing all manner of living things. Similarly, every individual thing that comes about is created from the Water that comes about by way of Allāh's *Mashiʾah*.

Thus the Water is the cosmological symbol of Universal *Walāyah*. It is the Cosmic Field that constitutes the "matter" of everything that exists, be it physical, spiritual (like the psyche), or intelligible (like a number).



The Prophet of Islām has said that observation of the sea is a kind of '*ibādah* or adoration and service of Allāh. In Arabia rivers are few and rare, but it would seem that any major body of water, river or sea, would qualify here. Meditate the harmony and continuity of the water, its flow, the life that draws upon it.

The theory that life and intelligence pervade all things is called "panpsychism." We may say that primordial Islamic cosmology involves a form of panpsychism.

See the discussions beginning on pages page 101 and page 128.

We revisit this in the sequel, beginning in TSP, page 31.

Meditate the waves that seem to take on a life of their own but which are inextricably tied to it. Through reflectively meditating upon the water one thereby meditates upon the very ground of all things that flows from the *Mashi'ah*. Through contemplating the water one thereby contemplates that *walāyah* which is the very symbol and descent of Universal *Walāyah*.

Ch

5.1.3 *The Rubūbiyyah of Allāh is projected from the Emptyrean of Allāh, His Pen, and His Tablet.*

The position that Allāh created the universe but has no role in its administration or guardianship amounts to a kind of *ta'til* or nullification of Allāh (see the discussion of *fanzih* beginning on page 109). Aristotle's theology, early Neoplatonism, and modern Christian deism each offer a variant of this position.

All things are created from the Water, the cosmic field of *walāyah* that grounds all creation. Within the Water, everything is interconnected. However, it is not the case that Allāh has left the Water to its own devices, removed the Hand of His Universal *Walāyah* from it, and has no role to play in administering its affairs:

Allāh keeps the heavens and the earth from perishing. And if they were to perish, no one else besides Him could keep them from doing so. [35:41]

Recall that everything in the universe is built upon *walāyah*-relationships. In particular, there are relative polar *walāyah*-relationships built around the poles of guardian and ward. The nucleus of the atom and the electron, the earth and the moon, the sun and the earth, the Milky Way galaxy and the sun, and the relationships between clusters of galaxies; the heart and the circulatory system of the body; the brain and the nervous system of the body; father and daughter, leader and follower, teacher and disciple: the world is built around relative *walāyah*-relationships.

In the Cosmic Field, the Water of *walāyah*-in-descent from the rain-cloud of the *Mashi'ah* immediately polarizes into a *walāyah*-relationship. At one pole is a principle of guardianship, organization and administration. At the other pole is everything else in the world, be it manifest or hidden. The pole of guardianship in the Cosmic Field is called "the 'Arsh" of Allāh:

Al-Rahmān projects His guardianship uniformly over the Throne. [20:5]

Moreover, He projects His guardianship uniformly over the Throne; He administers the command. [10:3]



The word '*arsh*' – as used in the Qur'ān – is occasionally translated as 'empyrean' (naming the highest and furthest celestial heaven), and usually as 'throne'. Both 'throne' and 'empyrean' are applicable to some degree, but neither expresses the primary signification of '*arsh*'.

Relating to its translation as 'empyrean' the word '*arsh*' is also used to mention the brick encasing of a well, the roof of a house, a dwelling that provides shade, or a pavilion; these reflect primary or close to primary uses of '*arsh*'. Relating to its translation as 'throne', '*arsh*' is used to mention the power, dominion, kingdom, and chair of a king; these reflect secondary or more distant uses of '*arsh*'. '*Arsh*' is also used to mention a structure of four or five pillars or columns (each usually made from the trunk of a date-palm tree) upon which grapevines grow and wrap themselves. The verbal root of '*arsh*' signifies the raising or building of such a structure from the ground up.

Thus, from the lexicographers we learn that the primary signification of '*arsh*' is something which is raised up from the ground and which has a covering, roof, or ceiling. Perhaps the use of '*arsh*' to mention a throne derives from the fact that a throne is not merely the seat of a king, it is the *raised* seat of a king, usually placed on a structure that is raised from the ground (like a seat on a high stage in a theater). Further, if the king holds court outside, such a seat would be covered to shade the king from the sun. Thus the '*arsh*' is not so much the seat but the raised structure upon which the seat is placed and covered.

The Qur'ān refers to something like this when referring to an incident in the story of Jacob and his son Joseph:

And he [Joseph] raised his parents upon the 'arsh, whereupon they all [including the children of Jacob] fell before him in prostration. [12:100]

So the concept "throne" is by no means the primary signification of the word '*arsh*'; rather, that concept is derived from and secondary to the original meaning of the word. The classical lexicographers of the Qur'ān generally reject the idea that the word '*arsh*' as used with respect to Allāh refers to a seat or throne.

“Ptolemaic cosmology was elaborated by Ptolemy (2nd century C.E.). His model, despite numerous improvements by Muslim astronomers, dominated both eastern and western thought until mortally wounded by Copernicus (d. 1543). It was finally laid completely to rest by Kepler (d. 1630) and Newton (d. 1727).”

“Sphere: For example: The moon orbits the earth and this orbit marks the outer boundary of the ‘sphere’ of the moon. Everything between this outer boundary and the earth belongs to the ‘sphere of the moon.’ The sphere of the Empyrean was the supreme sphere, encompassing all the lower spheres. One advantage in using ‘empyrean’ is that the Greek root of ‘empyrean’ pertains to fire. As we will learn, the ‘Arsh’ is a structure of light and so there is a useful connection here. Further on in the *ḥadīth* of Imām Bāqir about the creation of the Water, he says that the first thing created from the Water is the Fire. If we can identify the Fire referred to here with the ‘Arsh, then the term ‘Empyrean’ becomes even more appropriate.”

Cognizance of the Origin.

Furthermore, the Family of the Prophet in particular rejected this interpretation as well. As a metaphor, however, the ‘Arsh as Allāh’s “Throne of authority” is acceptable in some contexts.

The term ‘empyrean’ also has problems as a translation of ‘arsh’. It has certain connotations in ancient and medieval astronomy which can lead a reader to think that the Qur’ān supports some variety of the now outmoded Ptolemaic cosmological model of the heavens and of celestial motion. In particular, ‘empyrean’ refers to the highest sphere, a region of light and sublime fire that surrounds the entire universe.

On the other hand, in more modern times the word ‘empyrean’ evokes the idea of a supreme, sublime place or heaven from which God reigns over all. This latter connotation is reasonably close to, but by no means identical to, the notion of the ‘Arsh with which we are concerned here (partly because *tanzīh* precludes the notion of Allāh being in a place). We say, “with which we are concerned here,” because the word ‘arsh’ is used in a number of slightly different ways in the *aḥādīth*, some of which are also reasonably close to the connotations of ‘empyrean’. For lack of a better word and with the afore-mentioned reservations and caveats, we will translate ‘Arsh’ as ‘Empyrean’.



As we indicated above, the verbal root of ‘arsh’ signifies the raising or building of a structure with pillars or columns from the ground up; this is the primary significance of the word. Put another way, an ‘arsh, in the literal sense, is a pillared structure that is raised from its ground. The Cosmic Water Field is the ground of the ‘Arsh and the ‘Arsh is raised from the Water, as the Qur’ān says,

...and His Empyrean was over the ‘Water... [11:7]

The Cosmic Water that grounds all of creation is thus beneath the Empyrean. It is the source of the Empyrean, and also supports or “carries” the Empyrean. At the same time, the Water beneath the Empyrean is the ward of the Empyrean, and the Empyrean is the guardian and principle by means of which the affairs of everything that comes from the Water is administered.

Allāh is the origin of all becoming and motion.

The role of the Empyrean as the place through which Allāh’s *walāyah* and *rubūbiyyah* is channelled and projected is summed up succinctly in the following *āyah*:

Al-Raḥmān projects His guardianship uniformly over the Empyrean. [20:5]

5:

This *āyah* is actually quite difficult to translate. The expression ‘istawā ‘alā’, which we have translated as ‘projects uniform guardianship over’, is where the difficulty lies. According to the lexicographers, ‘istawā ‘alā’ is a synonym of ‘istawlā’, a derivative of ‘walāyah’. The word ‘istawlā’ means ‘(he) enveloped [something] in walāyah’. To the connotation of ‘istawlā’, ‘istawā ‘alā’ adds a connotation of evenness and uniformness. That is, Allāh’s *walāyah* and *rubūbiyyah* is distributed over creation so that nothing in reality is any closer to His grasp than anything else. A *ḥadīth* narrated by Imām Ṣādiq about the above *āyah* states:

[It means:] He projects His guardianship uniformly over everything, so nothing is closer to Him than anything else. Nothing distant can be distant from Him, and nothing near can be any more near to Him; He projects His guardianship uniformly over everything.

Note that the ‘Arsh is referred to Allāh through His proper name ‘Al-Raḥmān’. As we explained earlier (see page 129), of the two proper names of Allāh, ‘Allāh’ and ‘Al-Raḥmān’, the name ‘Al-Raḥmān’ refers to Allāh in particular correspondence to His essential *walāyah* and voluntary *walāyah*. Allāh’s power and knowledge (essential *walāyah*) are manifested through His action. And action (voluntary *walāyah*) descends from the Mystery to the Empyrean, and from the Empyrean to this immediate and visible world.

SUBTLE POINT: The *tanzīh* of Allāh per se – that is, His infinite, indescribable *aḥad*-ness, *ṣamad*-ness, and unknowability – is also manifested through the Action that descends from the Mystery through the Empyrean. But, properly speaking, this manifestation of *tanzīh* is connected to creation through the name ‘Allāh’ rather than through the name ‘Al-Raḥmān’. END OF SUBTLE POINT.

We have already met ‘istawlā’ in our discussion of the derivation of the name ‘Allāh’. See page 101.

With respect to essential *walāyah*, the Empyrean is at once created knowledge and created power. According to a *ḥadīth* narrated by the Family of the Prophet:

The Empyrean is not Allāh, but [the word] 'Empyrean' is a name for knowledge, power, and an 'arsh [i.e., raised structure] within which is each and every thing (shay').

What is meant by 'within which is each and every thing' is explained by another *ḥadīth*, this one narrated by 'Alī ibn Ḥusayn:

In the Empyrean is the likeness of everything that Allāh has created in land or sea. This is the interpretation of His saying, And there is not a thing (shay') except that its treasures are with Us... [15:21].

Given an individual created thing, it has a *treasury* (*khazānah*) in the Empyrean; that treasury constitutes a *likeness* (*timthāl*) of the created thing. Perhaps we can say that the sum total of these likenesses of all created things constitutes the contents of Allāh's *second* created knowledge. The first created knowledge is the first stage of the *Mashī'ah*, as discussed above. Such knowledge is a mystery within the Mystery, something which no one, not even a prophet or *walīyy* of Allāh, can encompass. Thus the Mystery contains the first stage of Allāh's created knowledge, and the Empyrean contains the second stage of that knowledge, a knowledge which descends from the first. We will return to this point further down.

Remember that Knowledge and Power are attributes of the Essence: When the *ḥadīth* says that 'Empyrean' is a name for knowledge and power, it is saying that the Empyrean is a manifestation of Allāh's essential *walāyah*.

The Empyrean is also the gate through which Allāh projects His voluntary *walāyah*:

Moreover, He projects His guardianship uniformly over the Throne; He administers the command. [10:3]

In this *āyah* the uniform projection of *walāyah* is explained in terms of administration and governance, that is, lordship and

Allāh is the origin of all becoming and motion.

rubūbiyyah. Administration and *rubūbiyyah* are summed up in the four voluntary activities of creating, providing, giving death, and giving life:

Allāh is the one who created you; then He provided for you; then He gives you death; then He gives you life [again]. Are there any amongst your associates who can do any of that?!? How high and exalted is Allāh above that which they associate [with Him]! [30:40]

Every act of Allāh in His creation can be understood in terms of one of these four activities.



According to a *ḥadīth* of Imām 'Alī, the Empyrean is cubicle in structure. It is made of four pillars of light: a white light, a yellow light, a green light and a red light. The white light is the light of knowledge and consciousness ('*aqī*). Consciousness is the first and foundational pillar of the Empyrean (according to the *Ḥadīth* of the Troops of Consciousness – see *IS'P*, page 138). We will return to the cubicle nature of the Empyrean below.

The following correspondences and identification are found scattered throughout the Qur'ān and reliable *ahādīth*. However, it would take up too much space to concatenate all the relevant references here, in part because most of these *ahādīth* are full of many symbols, each of which requires some explanation of its own. To summarize:

The white light also corresponds to the *Pen* (*Qalam*):

Nūn! By the Pen and what they inscribe. [68:1]

The word 'Nūn' names the twenty-fifth letter of the Arabic alphabet (phonetically equivalent to our letter 'N'). It is also used to name, among other things, an inkwell with ink in it.

Some traditions describe the *Nūn* as a river, which Allāh commanded to congeal into ink. Thus, it is an ink derived from the primordial Water.

From the ink of the *Nūn*, the Pen inscribes upon the *Preserved Tablet* (*Lawḥ Mahfūz*). The Preserved Tablet contains the

There are authentic traditions which directly symbolize the red pillar in particular with red ruby or red hyacinth, and others which indirectly symbolize the white light with white pearl.

It is interesting that the letter *nūn* in Arabic actually looks like a bowl or inkwell:



A PHILOSOPHICAL POINT: It would be a lot more precise to call the first stage of knowledge within the Mystery "creative knowledge" – since it is within the *Mashī'ah*, which in turn is the process of creating – and the knowledge within the Empyrean "created knowledge." Loosely, however, even the Mystery and the knowledge therein is a creation. That is, the word "creation" may be used in two ways: It may be used to mention everything other than Allāh – including the *Mashī'ah*, and it may be used to mention just the outcome of the *Mashī'ah*, while the *Mashī'ah* itself constitutes the creating, not the creation.

original Qurʾān – before its descent to the visible world –, as well as a record of all things beneath the Empyrean, including their actions, term of expiration, provisions, and so forth. It is apparently a manifestation of the *taqdir* or determination stage of the *Mashiʾah*. The knowledge that characterizes the Empyrean is thus located within the Preserved Tablet.

The Preserved Tablet is the green light of the Empyrean; it is the Universal Soul of everything beneath the Empyrean:

Neither your creation nor your being sent forth is like anything other than a single soul. [31:28]

The yellow light of the Empyrean corresponds to the *Spirit* (*Rūh*). In the Qurʾān we read:

They ask you [O Prophet] concerning the Spirit. Say: "The Spirit is from the Commanding of My Cherisher-Lord, and you all have not been given of knowledge except a little." [17:85]

After *Consciousness* (*ʿAql*), the Spirit is perhaps the mightiest of Allāh's creation. According to the *ahādīth*, it is a creation higher than even the mightiest of angels. It is through the Spirit that the prophets and those sharing their rank of *walāyah* (such as Mary, the mother of Jesus) obtain their knowledge and power to do things normally considered to be out of the ordinary.

The word '*rūh*' ('spirit') is derived from '*riḥ*', meaning "wind". In the *ḥadīth* that Imām Bāqir narrated about the Water, the Spirit is actually called, "the Wind." Other traditions also explain that the Spirit is a kind of wind. The Spirit is not a static thing but a movement and energy that effuses everything alive. Indeed, it would not be inaccurate to translate '*al-Rūh*' as 'the Energy'. Without the *Rūh*, everything beneath the Empyrean would come to a complete halt. Perhaps this is why, according to another *ḥadīth* narrated by Imām Bāqir, Allāh says to the Wind (i.e., the Spirit),

You are my greatest soldier!

The red light of the Empyrean is the pillar of creation beneath the Empyrean. It stretches as a pillar of red ruby from the Empyrean

to this physical universe. Like the red blood in the body, it is the vehicle that connects everything to the Heart of the World, that is, the Empyrean. The red light carries all the vibrations of created things; one might say that it is Nature herself, the Universal Nature of everything beneath the Empyrean.



Closely related to the red light is the world of *motes* (*dharr*). It is here that the individual souls unique to each one of us come into being. We discuss this realm in some detail in the sequel (viz. *ISP*; see *ISP*, Principle 1.5). In the world of motes is found the primordial clay (*ṭinah*) out of which each individual is molded.

5.1.4 *The hidden world of the Empyrean manifests in the Celestial Dominion.*

The Empyrean, its four lights, and related matters (such as angels, the world of motes and the like) constitute the *hidden* (*bāṭin*) world. This is distinct from the world of the *Mystery* (*ḡhayb*)⁶.

Now we come to what is, at least roughly, the visible world. The physical universe in its entirety is usually named in the Qurʾān by the expression, 'the heavens and the earth'. Sometimes the word '*mulk*' (generally translated as 'dominion') is used to mention the outer, manifest visible world and its movements, natural laws, and other aspects, collectively called "workings."

In the Qurʾān we read:

Indeed! To Him the Commanding (Amr) and the Creation! [7:54]

So glorified is He in whose Hand are the inner workings (malakūt) of the Heavens and the Earth; you will be returned to Him! [36:83]

Magnified is the One in Whose Hand is the dominion (mulk); He is powerful over each and every thing. [67:1]

The manifest (*zāhir*) world of the *mulk* (outer workings) thus stands in contrast to the *hidden* (*bāṭin*) world of the *malakūt* (inner workings), and both stand in contrast to the *mystery* (*ḡhayb*) of the *Commanding* (*Amr*) – that is, the *Mashiʾah*.

⁶ This distinction is important because sometimes people confuse the two (hidden and mysterious). For example: The prophets and some of the *awliya'* may have at least some knowledge of the hidden (*bāṭin*) proper, but little to no direct knowledge of the mysterious (*ḡhayb*) proper. Sometimes the word '*ḡhayb*' is also used to mention both the *ḡhayb* proper as well as the *bāṭin*; the lack of awareness of this contributes to the confusion. One should always remember that it is common in Islamic terminology for a word or name to name both the first phase of a phenomenon as well as a larger field. See the discussion on Islamic terminological usage beginning on *ISP*, page 39. We will return to this distinction below.

Ch

According to a *ḥadīth* of Imām ʿAlī, the soul that says, "I," is the place where knowledge resides; it is the "tablet," so to speak, of the knowledge within a given person. The Preserved Tablet is thus the Universal Soul, encompassing everything beneath the Empyrean. It is the soul of the single soul.

In English we have the expression 'to get a second wind', meaning, "a second burst of energy".

Corresponding to the 'Arsh or Empyrean (in the hidden world of the *malakūt*) is the *Kursiyy* (in the manifest world of the *mulk*):

His Kursiyy encompasses the heavens and the earth...

[2:255]

The word '*kursiyy*' is almost as problematic as '*arsh*'. The word '*kursiyy*' may be used to mention a throne, seat, or simple chair; this is analogous to one of the usages of '*arsh*'. As for the *Kursiyy* of Allāh, there is hardly any scriptural evidence from the Qur'ān or *ahādith* to warrant that it is a throne or chair of any kind. The Qur'ān does mention a *kursiyy* of the Prophet Solomon, but even here it is not conclusive that "chair" per se is signified.

The known connotations of the root of '*kursiyy*' (*k r s*) also have little, if any, apparent connection to the ideas "chair" or "throne". The connotations of this root include "putting something together, one part over the other" or "collecting together". Related to this is the connotation "a building and its foundation becoming compact and cohesive". Derivatives of this word were used to describe buildings made from compact mud or dung. A *kirs* is the foundation of a building. A collection of bound documents is a *kurrāsah*, so-called because its papers are compacted together. According to the lexicographers, both '*kursiyy*' and '*kurrāsah*' each mean "a concrete object whose parts each necessitate one another".

These connotations appear to be directly related to the meaning of '*kursiyy*', in the sense of 'Allāh's *Kursiyy*'. According to scriptural evidence, the *Kursiyy* is a body that encompasses and contains the entirety of heavens and the earth, that is, the physical universe. In this universe everything is harmonious and cohesive:

You will not find in the creation of Al-Rahmān any disharmony or discontinuity. [67:3]

Have you not seen how Allāh has created seven heavens in strata [that is, one on top of the other]: [71:15]

Thus the word '*kursiyy*' would seem to signify something that pertains to the structuring of the physical universe, its cohesiveness, and its being collected together as a single whole.

Another signification of the root *k r s* has to do with the stringing of beads along a necklace. This idea can be used as a metaphor for the stars, and we find that the ancient astronomers used '*kursiyy*' to name the outermost sphere of the stars, but still below the astronomical empyrean.

Yet another signification of this root is "gathering of knowledge in the heart". There are a number of authentic *ahādith* that identify the *Kursiyy* with knowledge. This is *manifest* (*ẓāhir*) knowledge, knowledge of the laws of nature and everything pertaining to the physical universe and its *outer workings* (*mulk*).

The name '*Kursiyy*' thus poses problems for the translator, as you can see. It is analogous to the '*Arsh*', particularly from the astronomical perspective. Perhaps the closest word in modern English usage is the adjective 'celestial'. In the case of the adjective 'empyrean' we have a corresponding noun, 'empyrean'. There is a corresponding noun for the adjective 'celestial', namely, just 'celestial'. A celestial is a heavenly or mythical being from the heavens, which is not quite what we need. The compound 'celestial sphere' is available, but that smacks too much of astronomical theory. For our purposes, we will create a compound: 'Celestial Dominion'.

Perhaps, if we use this enough, we will be able to abbreviate this as simply 'the Celestial'.



There are three kinds of knowledge which constitute manifestations of Allāh's essential *walāyah*:

1 Ghayb (Mystery)

This corresponds to the realm of the *Mashī'ah* ('Wish'). No one has full access to this except for Allāh;

2 Bāṭin (Hidden)

This corresponds to the realm of the *malakūt* (inner workings) in the Empyrean. This is the knowledge that the prophets are given access to, some more than others. Those who have reached the

For spheres, see the marginal note on page 154.

5

CAVEAT & SUBTLETY: The *Kursiyy* actually contains regions that we would normally call "hidden", although in Islamic cosmology they are considered "manifest." That is, the world of *outer workings* (*mulk*) is more vast than the physical universe that astro-physicists study. These regions are not really hidden (*bāṭin*); rather, they are *subtle* (*la'if*). The *Kursiyy* contains very subtle regions of time and space that are beyond the reach of science at this time, but which are still *manifest* (*ẓāhir*) with respect to the *malakūt* region. These subtle regions are quite vast. According to a famous *hadith* of the Prophet narrated by his companion Abū Dharr:

'The seven heavens in the *Kursiyy* are but like a ring thrown in a vast desert. And the superiority of the 'Arsh over the *Kursiyy* is like the superiority of the desert over that ring.'

higher stages of *Yaqin* (See *IST*, Principle 2.5) are also given some limited access to this realm of knowledge;

3 *Zahir* (Manifest)

Ch

This corresponds to the realm of the *mulk* (outer workings) in the Celestial Dominion. This is the knowledge which is relatively accessible to astronomers, physicists, chemists, biologists, geologists, physiologists, psychologists, and other scientists.

Imām Šādiq narrates the following *ḥadīth*, confirming the above division of knowledge:

Note that the *ḥadīth* does not say that direct knowledge of the wish (*mashī'ah*) and the desire (*irādah*) are in the Empyrean, only a description of the wish and the desire. For the actual wish and desire belong to the Mystery.

The Empyrean per se is distinct from the Celestial Dominion, because each is a [separate] door, and are among the greatest of the doors to the Mysteries, and together they also constitute two mysteries. In the unseen they are connected because the Celestial Dominion is the manifest (ẓāhir) door to the Mystery from which came the dawn of origination as well as all things (shay'). And the Empyrean is the hidden (bātin) door in which is found knowledge of quality, becoming, determination (qadar), limit, location, and the description of the wish (mashī'ah) and the desire (irādah)...

Finally the Mystery contains one knowledge (generally inaccessible), and the hidden and manifest together constitute another knowledge (generally accessible). Imām Bāqir narrates the following *ḥadīth*:

Knowledge is actually two kinds: There is a knowledge that belongs to Allāh and which is treasured; not a single one from amongst creation can examine it. Then there is a knowledge He teaches His angels and messengers. That which He teaches His angels and messengers will come about; Allāh does not belie Himself, His angels, nor His messengers. 'But the knowledge that is treasured; He advances from it what He wishes, He delays from it what He wishes, and He confirms what He wishes.

This is a commentary on the *āyah*:

Allāh is the origin of all becoming and motion.

Allāh erases what He wishes and He confirms; to Him belongs the Mother of the Book. [13:39]

In the Preserved Tablet of the Empyrean, there is a record of that which will take place. Parts of this record are fixed, including the promises made to the messengers and prophets of Allāh. But parts are not fixed: There is a *Mother of the Book* in the Mystery before the *beginning of the Action*, i.e., before the first stage of the *mashī'ah*. This adds a dynamic element to the Tablet. Things are not always as they appear, not even in the Preserved Tablet. There is no absolute predestination.

Consider the *āyah*, *Allāh erases what He wishes and He confirms....* Sometimes Allāh wishes but does not desire; sometimes He desires but does not determine, sometimes He determines but does not make the decision, thereby fulfilling the original wish. The descent of a thing may be suspended in the Mystery.

The interaction of the three types of knowledge and the stages of the *Mashī'ah* lead to all kinds of possibilities. Sometimes things appear one way in the Preserved Tablet, then Allāh erases it and replaces it with something else. For example: This interaction plays a major role in the answering of prayer and supplication. Further, in this interaction lies the secret to the question of free will and predestination, as well as to the point that Allāh is absolutely just. We cannot delve any more deeply into this deep, dangerous sea here, where many a thinker, philosopher, theologian and mystic has drowned or barely escaped with his life. We will leave the reader with two *ahādīth*: First is the very famous *ḥadīth* which serves as the ship by which one may navigate this treacherous ocean. As Imām Šādiq reports,

There is no predestination and no free will; rather, it is a matter between the two matters.

Second is another *ḥadīth* which serves as a commentary on the first (also narrated by Imām Šādiq):

Surely Allāh created the creation, knowing that towards which they are becoming. He commanded them [to certain things] and He forbade them [from other things]. 'Whatever thing He commanded them to do, He surely made for

There is no predestination and no free will. Literally, There is no compulsion [from Allāh] and no delegation [of Allāh's authority to the human being].

them a path to abstain from it. They cannot come to carry it out or leave it except through the permission of Allāh.



Ch

We have now reached the end of our outline of some of the major categories of Islāmic cosmology, and of the descent of *walāyah* and *rubūbiyyah* from the Mystery down to the physical universe. We reiterate that we have left out many details and subtleties, but the basic outline is there. For a summary of the stages of Action and Creation, see Table 5.1.41.

Stages of the Descent of 'Walāyah				
General	Knowledge	Realms	Micro-stages	
Action	Mystery	Mashi'ah (<i>Amr</i>)	'ilm <i>mashi'ah</i> irādah <i>taqdīr</i> <i>qada'</i> <i>imda'</i>	(knowledge) (wish) (desire) (determination) (decision) (fulfilment)
			Water	
Creation	Hidden	'Arsh (<i>Malakūt</i>)	'aql (consciousness) <i>rūh</i> (spirit) <i>nafs</i> (soul)	The Pen
			<i>finah/dharr</i>	The Tablet (clay/motes)
	Manifest	Kursi (<i>Mulk</i>)	physical universe	heavens and earth

Table 5.1.41 The descent of *walāyah* and *rubūbiyyah*.



The best symbol of the entire cosmological system of Islām is the Ka'bah, located in Mecca, the birthplace of the Prophet of Islām. The Ka'bah is a cubicle structure (in fact the word 'ka'bah' literally means "cube") that dates back to the time of Ishmael, the first son of Abraham. Raised by Abraham and Ishmael together from the sands of Mecca, the Ka'bah is also the key symbol of the 'Arsh or Empyrean. Indeed, the Ka'bah is itself an 'arsh, that is, a raised, roofed, structure. Its four corners mirror the four corners of the 'Arsh.

Allāh is the origin of all becoming and motion.

According to a *ḥadīth* of the Prophet of Islām narrated by Imām Ṣādiq:

The Ka'bah is called "Ka'bah" because it is square-based. 'It is square-based because it is in correspondence to the Oft-frequented House ('Bayt Ma'mūr), which is square-based. The Oft-frequented House is square-based because the Empyrean is square-based. The Empyrean is square based because the phrases upon which Islām is based are four: 'Subhāna allāh!' [ecstatic exclamation of *tanzīh* (see page 109)], 'Al-ḥamdu li- allāh' ('Praise to Allāh'), 'Lā ilāha illā allāhu' (There is no deity/ultimate source of *walāyah* except for Allāh), and 'Allāhu akbar!' ('Allāh is greater!').

Thus there is a correspondence between the 'Arsh, the subtle regions of the Celestial Dominion, and the clearly visible regions of the Celestial Dominion. Each vertical corner of the Ka'bah thus corresponds to one of the pillars of the Empyrean, and to one of the four phrases, each of which is a *calling to presence* (*dhikr*) of Allāh (see the discussion of *dhikr* beginning on *ISP*, page 151).

There are additional square- and four-based correspondences mentioned in the scriptural sources of Islāmic cosmology. Table 5.1.42 summarizes just some of the correspondences relevant to our discussion.

A couple of notes:

- As we explained earlier in a marginal note (see page 146), there are four stages to the actual Action; the *mashi'ah* (wish) is the *beginning of the Action*, as the *ḥadīth* says;
- The order of corners of the Ka'bah goes counter-clockwise, in accordance with the direction used by the pilgrims when circling the Ka'bah during *Hajj*;
- The Black Stone is probably a meteorite; according to tradition it was originally white, thus mirroring the white light of consciousness. It is located along one of the vertical corners of the Ka'bah.

Oft-frequented House: This is a house mentioned in Q 52:4 that apparently lies in one of the subtle regions of the Celestial Dominion (see page 160). The angels and other subtle beings make frequent pilgrimage to the Oft-frequented House just as Muslims make frequent pilgrimage to Mecca. That is, the pilgrimage to Mecca mirrors the visits of celestial and empyrean beings to the Oft-frequented House.

Mashl'ah	Empyrean		Ka'bah	Dhikr
wish	white light	consciousness	corner with Black Stone	<i>Subhānu allāh!</i>
desire	yellow light	spirit	second	<i>Al-hamdu li allāh</i>
determination	green light	soul	third	<i>'Lā ilāhu illā allāhu</i>
decision	red light	nature	fourth	<i>Allāhu akbar!</i>

Table 5.1.42 Square- and four-based correspondences in the cosmology of Islām.



In their five daily communions, Muslims face Mecca and prostrate in the direction of the Ka'bah. One of the reasons for this is now clear. The Ka'bah is the symbol of the 'Arsh and Empyrean of Allāh, and the Empyrean is the place from where the activity of Allāh's created *walāyah* and *rubūbiyyah* is projected. The facing towards Mecca symbolizes the orientation of the human being towards Al-Rahmān through the gateway of that Empyrean through which *Al-Rahmān uniformly projects His guardianship* [20:4].

5.2 Allāh administers creation through creation, both visible and invisible.

In the hidden realm of the Empyrean and within the subtle regions of the Celestial Dominion (see the marginal note on page 161) there are living beings with varying degrees of intelligence, consciousness, and will. These are the *angels* (*malā'ikah*) and *Jinn* (*Jinn*, the English term coming directly from the Arabic). A discussion of these hidden, non-manifest beings deserves a detailed discussion that we cannot give here. It should be known, however, that the Qur'ān and the traditions affirm their existence (there are dozens of references to the angels in the Qur'ān alone) and dynamic belief in them is a part of dynamic belief in the Qur'ān and the Prophet.

The general consensus of the lexicographers and grammarians is that the word '*malak*' (singular) is a phonetic abbreviation for either '*mal'ak*' (س ل ك) or '*mal'ak*' (ل س ك). The two roots each carry a similar connotation: the sending of a message or sending

Allāh administers creation through creation, both visible and invisible.

out on a mission. Thus an angel is a messenger, in particular, a messenger from the Empyrean to the realms beneath it.

If we take the word '*malak*' on face value, its root is *m l k*, which signifies power, control, and ownership. Thus an angel is a power or force, analogous to a force of nature (like a windstorm).

Both derivations are consistent with the Qur'ānic account of angels. In general: *An angel is a celestial power made of light, possessing consciousness and intelligence, that carries out missions from the Empyrean, including the bearing of messages, signs, and portents.*

From the Qur'ān:

Moreover, He projects His guardianship uniformly over the Throne; He administers the command. [10:3]

'By the administrators of the command! [79:5]

The Angels and the Spirit descend therein - with the permission of their Cherisher-Lord - with every command. [96:4]

The basic function of the angels is the administration of everything beneath the Empyrean. Although they have intelligence and consciousness, they do nothing except what they are commanded. It is not the case that Allāh has delegated any independent *walāyah* or authority to them:

Rather, [they are] honored adorer-servants.

They do not precede Him in speech and only through His command do they act. [21:26-27]

That is, they are the vehicles of the *Amr* or Commanding of Allāh, and the carriers of His *rubūbiyyah*.



Angels have ranks. At the top are Michael (*Mikā'il*), Raphael (*Isrā'il*), the Angel of Death (Ezrail (*'Izrā'il*)), and Gabriel (*Jibril*). Note that their number is four, the same as the number of pillars of the Empyrean. The relation of each angel to a pillar of the Empyrean is summarized in Table 5.23.

NOTE: The name 'Angel of Death' is much more common than 'Ezrail' ('Izrā'il') in the traditions, and is the name used in the Qur'ān (viz., Q 32:11).

From the point of view of sending out the angels on missions from the 'Arsh, the metaphor of 'Throne for the 'Arsh may be more apt than merely Empyrean. For a king directs his troops from his throne of authority.

Angel	Light	Administration
Michael	white	provision
Raphael	yellow	life
Angel of Death	green	death
Gabriel	red	creation

Table 5.23 The four chief angels and the Empyrean.

These four angels are not demigods; they have absolutely no independent authority whatsoever. One cannot ask any of them for provision, life, death, or influence over natural events. They merely carry out what Allāh has commanded them; they are created vehicles of His *rubūbiyyah*, but have no *rubūbiyyah* of their own. Only Allāh can answer supplication and prayer.



The primary symbol of the angel in the visible realm is the *bird*. Pigeons were commonly used as messengers once upon a time; hawks were also sent out on missions. From high in the sky, a majestic eagle descends down and then flies back to the sky. Its home lies in high cliffs and mountain tops. Similarly, the angels descend from the higher subtle heavens of the Celestial Dominion, or from the very Empyrean itself, flying back up once their missions are completed. The singing and warbling of the birds of nature is considered to be a kind of glorification of Allāh, and an exclamation of *tanzih*: According to many *ahādith*, there are angels whose primary if not sole function is the exclamation of *tanzih* and singing it across the cosmos. That is: Through one class of angels, the vibrations of the exclamation of *tanzih* fill the entire Empyrean and the Celestial Dominion.

The Qurʾān mentions the symbol of the bird explicitly:

Have you not seen that whoever is in the heavens and the earth glorifies Allāh; the birds in ranks? For sure, each knows its way of communion and its glorification.
[24:41]

Allāh administers creation, through creation, both visible and invisible:

According to the Family of the Prophet, The *birds in ranks* are angels. The Qurʾān also speaks of angels with wings:

Praise to Allāh, the Naturalizer of the heavens and the earth, the Maker of the angels as messengers with wings: two, three, and four. He adds to creation as He wishes: Surely Allāh is powerful over each and every thing.

Based on the numerous *ahādith* on the subject, it appears that the more *wings* an angel has, the more powerful that angel is.

According to the Prophet, of all of Allāh's creation, Allāh created more angels than anything else in the universe. There is at least one angel associated with each and every visible thing and event. The very laws of nature of the visible world are supported by these subtle and hidden angelic forces, through which the harmony of the cosmos is maintained:

...the primordial nature of Allāh upon which he naturalized humanity. There is no changing the creation of Allāh. [30:30]

You will not find in the creation of Al-Rahmān any disharmony or discontinuity. [67:3]



The plural '*malā'ikah*' has a general sense and a specialized sense. In the specialized sense, it refers to the beings of light mentioned above. In the general sense, the word '*malā'ikah*' is sometimes used to mention – in addition to and along with the angels proper – a class of living creatures which are definitely not angels, but which do inhabit both some of the lower subtle regions and even visible regions of the Celestial Dominion (but not the higher celestial regions or the Empyrean). These are the *jinn*.

The root of the word '*jinn*' (j n n) connotes the hiding of something behind a veil or screen; perhaps this relates to the subtle nature of the *jinn* as subtle beings normally hidden from human sight. We do not know very much about these beings beyond what the Qurʾān says about them. What we do know is that they have a degree of freedom of choice analogous to that possessed by humans.

For *jahūd* and
'*inād*, see both
page 212 and
the larger con-
text provided in
TSP, Principle 2.7.
Unlike the biblical
account, *ibq* Satan
was never an an-
gel to begin with.
Rather,
*He was one of the
jinn...* [18:50].

Among the jinn are those who are Muslim, that is, who submit to Allāh and who return *‘ubūdiyyah* to His *rubūbiyyah*. Then there are those who *reject* (*jahūd*) or *obstinately rebel* (*‘inād*) against Allāh: such a being is a *shaytān* (*satan* or *devil*). Chief among them is the Satan himself, whose proper name in the Qurʾān is Iblis. The Satan and the satans or devils who share his obstinate rebellion *whisper into the hearts* (Q 114:5) of both *jinn and humanity* (Q 114:6). For those who truly turn away from Allāh's *walāyah* and wilfully engage in falsehood and sin, these satans actually *descend* (Q 26:221) into them, so that they may also be called satans as well:

Shall I inform you about those upon whom descend the satans?

They descend upon every sinful purveyor of falsehoods; hearkening to them, and most of them are liars. [26:221–223]

Thus do we make the satans from amongst humanity and the jinn an enemy to each and every prophet. [6:112]

The Qurʾān sometimes addresses the Jinn alongside humanity:

O masses of jinn and humanity! Have there not come to you messengers from amongst you who relate to you Our signs...? [6:130]



The foregoing is only a minimal sampling of the cosmology of angels and jinn. It is our intention to expand upon this in another book, perhaps a future sequel to this one.

5.3 *Man is the vicegerent of Allāh on the Earth.*

In the cosmological scheme, the human being plays an all-important role here on the earth. The human being is the vicegerent or representative of Allāh on the earth, and a microcosm of the two hands of power and bounty, as we mentioned earlier (see page 117):

Man is the vicegerent of Allāh on the Earth.

Indeed we created the human being in the most beautiful of molds.

Then we abased him to the lowest of the low. [95:4–5]

That is, the human being is the most sublime of Allāh's creation on this earth, but through that very sublimeness and beauty – which includes his highly advanced freedom of choice and decision – he becomes lower than a beast:

They are like cattle; nay, even more astray. [7:179]

The two hands of power and bounty are actually the hand of strength to follow Allāh's *walāyah* and the hand of freedom of choice. According to the following *ḥadīth* narrated by ʿAlī ibn Ḥusayn, Allāh says,

O children of Adam!...Through my strength you fulfil my commandments, and through my bounty you have the power to disobey me.

Freedom of choice is thus a special bounty or gift from Allāh.

Throughout the Qurʾān are accounts of the primordial creation of humanity, its parents Adam and Eve, the reaction of the Angels and Iblis to the creation of humanity, and the descent of humanity from the subtle earth of the Garden to this visible earth. We leave the detailed discussion of the cosmological role of humanity to a future sequel to this book. In the immediate sequel (TSP), however, we will deal with the cosmological aspects of the human being and his creation that directly pertain to his moral and mystical journey to Allāh.

Here let us just point out the following, perhaps most important, cosmological point about humanity: The earth and everything that is in it is a trust and responsibility that Allāh has allowed humanity to carry. Humanity was created to bear this trust:

And when your Cherisher-Lord said to the angels: "I am making a vicegerent on the earth". [2:30]

We presented the Trust to the heavens, the earth, and the mountains, who immediately refrained from bearing

The word 'genie' is a corruption of 'jinn'. The genies of eastern and western fantasy literature and film are loosely inspired by the Qurʾānic accounts of the jinn.

it and dreaded it. Then Humanity took it: Surely he was unjust and ignorant. [33:72]

The second *āyah* in particular is more enigmatic than it appears from the translation; there are a couple of subtleties important for us here. For one thing, the word '*ẓalūm*' ('unjust') signifies both injustice to others and to oneself. In fact, it is possible that "self-injustice" is the primary signification of '*ẓalūm*', as is suggested by a *ḥadīth* from Imām 'Alī that we will quote from momentarily.

For another thing, the *Trust* (*Amānah*) in general is the *walāyah* that human beings exercise over the earth. In particular, it is the *walāyah* that is exercised by its leaders and rulers. According to the Family of the Prophet:

The Amānah is the walāyah [of the earth, its resources, and its inhabitants]. Whoever takes it without haqq has thereby committed kufr.

That is, *walāyah* and guardianship of the earth, its resources, and its inhabitants is conditional upon *haqq*. By '*haqq*' here what is meant truth, reality, and deserving-ness. It is, such a huge responsibility that even the mountains, the most majestic of all that is on land and whose roots hold together the land masses, dreadfully refrained from taking on the *walāyah* of the planet. But many people have ignorantly and unjustly taken on this task: kings, emperors, sultans, dictators, presidents, prime ministers (as well as their ministers and allies), in the end doing more damage than benefit. Whether one is an "enlightened" despot, or a "democratically elected" president, the *walāyah* of the earth is a dreadful responsibility that can only be executed through *haqq* and by people who are in complete harmony with *haqq* and *walāyah*. The Qur'ān, echoing the Psalms, has said,

And for sure: We have written in the 'Psalms' - after the calling to presence (from Allāh) - that the earth: My righteous servants will inherit it. [21:105]

Imām 'Alī has summed up the above two points, in a commentary on Q 33:72:

Surely he was unjust to himself, and ignorant of the command of his Cherisher-Lord. Whoever does not fulfil the Trust by means of its associated haqq (truth, reality, and deserved-ness of carrying it) he is both unjust to himself and a tyrant.

As we shall see in the sequel (*ISP*), one of the conditions of acting in harmony with *haqq* and *walāyah* is *ihsān* (acting beautifully). *Ihsān* is one of the lofty goals of the process of returning *walāyah* and '*ubūdiyyah*' to Allāh, as well as a condition of true justice. Indeed, we can say that fulfilling the Trust is a matter of *ihsān* or beautiful action to all of creation. And beautiful action is purely a function of harmony with *walāyah*. Just as *walāyah* is real (*haqq*) and objective, harmony with it is also real and objective. Hence the fulfilling of the trust is not a matter of dictatorial or despotic whim, nor is it a matter of popular will or emotion. Rather, *ihsān* towards creation and harmony with the *walāyah* that runs through all things is an objective matter, something to be objectively pursued and attained. Yet, unfortunately:

...the majority of them do not exercise consciousness.
[5:103]

5.4 Allāh communicates with and guides creation.

We have emphasized again and again the importance of *ma'rifah* and cognizance of Allāh. The return of *walāyah* and '*ubūdiyyah*' to Allāh, and the development of harmony with Allāh's *walāyah* and *rubūbiyyah*, are functions of *ma'rifah* and cognizance. According to the way of *walāyah*, the way to cognizance is a right that creation has over Allāh. According to a *ḥadīth* narrated by Imām Ṣādiq:

It is not the right of Allāh over creation that they cognize Him. Rather, it is the right of creation over Allāh that He make them cognizant of Him. Then it is Allāh's right over creation - after He has made them cognizant of Him - that they accept and respond to Him.

Ch

For kufr, see *ISP*, Principle 2.7. Any of the first four types of kufr, denial (*inkār*), rejection (*jubūd*), obstinacy ('*imād*'), or ingratitude, apply here.

5

Chapter deals with the cultivation of *Ihsān* and beyond; the term '*ihsān*' is introduced under *ISP*, Subprinciple 2.4.3.

Recall the *ḥadīth*
from the Prophet
(from Principle 3.7):

O Abū Dharr!...
Know that the primary point of the *ḥadīth* of Allāh is cognizing Him. It is the primary point before everything else, and nothing else [in 'ibādah] is before it. It is also a solitary point such that nothing [in 'ibādah] is [independently] secondary to it. And it is the remaining point which has no final limit.

Just as *ma'rifah* constitutes our first and final duty to Allāh, we have a right for Allāh to show us the way and to make us cognizant of Him. The way Allāh does this, the way Allāh makes us cognizant of Him, is through *speaking* (*kalām*) to our hearts through our eyes, ears, consciousness, and through our innermost self. Each of the four varieties of sign discussed earlier (see Principle 3.9) is a medium of Allāh's speech to creation and humanity.

Put another way: Allāh's speech includes the Qur'ān as the Word of God. It also includes the movements of the macrocosm and microcosm. The macrocosm is itself a "book" of Allāh, to be "read" and contemplated like just as one reads and contemplates a book of paper and two covers. The words and letters of this book are the signs, symbols, and *imprints of the Mercy of Allāh* (that is, of His Wish and Desire); each domain therein is a chapter of this book: The earth, the solar system, the sun, the stars, the galaxies, and so forth. Each chapter contains sections: so to the chapter of the earth there are sections for the seas, the mountains, the plains, the forests, and so forth. But unlike a static book the Book of the Cosmos is always in motion and development; Allāh's speech continues on and on through cycles of creation, life, and death.

The microcosm is also a book. The Prophet of Islām is famous for the statement,

'Whoever cognizes his self thereby cognizes his Cherisher and Lord.

That is, Allāh speaks to your self through your self:

And within yourselves; Will you not look and see?
[51:21]

The role of the macrocosm and microcosm as books of Allāh is summed up in a famous piece of poetry attributed to Imām 'Alī:

*You suppose that you are nothing but a little germ,
Yet within you the Greater Universe is enfolded;
You are the book that makes clear and which
through its letters the hidden becomes manifest!*

And the following *ḥadīth* is narrated from Imām Ṣādiq:

Surely Allāh becomes revealed to His adorer-servants through His speech, but they do not see.



Of course, in Islām the Book of Allāh per se is the Qur'ān. This is the Recital which, according to Islām, is a *revelation* (*wahy*) of Allāh to Muḥammad (Ṣ). The word '*wahy*' literally means "a hidden, symbolic speech that is immediately perceived". It is hidden in the sense that it is not perceived by others, and symbolic in that it involves a symbolism that the giver and receiver mutually understand. A spy speaking to a fellow spy in an immediately decipherable code would constitute a kind of *wahy*.

In the case of Allāh, *wahy* is the manner of Allāh's speaking to creation in general and the human being in particular. There are, according to the Family of the Prophet, two kinds of *wahy*:

1 Mouth-to-mouth (*Mushāfahah*)

In this case, Allāh speaks directly to the receiver in a clear, precise language. According to the Qur'ān itself:

'It is not for any mortal that Allāh speak to him except through wahy: either [He symbolically speaks] from behind a veil or He sends a messenger to symbolically speak (wahy) what He wishes. [42:51]

In the case of a veil, a clear precise voice is transmitted through some object (like the burning bush of Moses). In the case of a messenger, an angel descends from the Empyrean and conveys in a clear and precise voice *what He wishes*. That is, the angel carries a precise symbolic translation of a message that descends from the *Mashī'ah* or Wish of Allāh.

Mouth-to-mouth *wahy* is the scriptural sense of '*wahy*'. Revelation in the sense of 'the word of Allāh' is that which Allāh himself has symbolically translated from His Wish to human expressions. The symbolic translation is conveyed through either a veil or an angel. Neither the veil nor the angel add anything

There is nothing whatsoever in Islam or the Qurʾān that restricts within revelation to a subset of the prophets mentioned in the Qurʾān. However, the revelations mentioned in the Qurʾān are the only ones a Muslim is required to specifically acknowledge.

Pre-Qurʾānic revelations besides these are purely a matter of speculation.

of itself. Each functions as an audio tape or compact disc. From the *Mashiʾah* the word of Allāh is imprinted on an appropriate medium, from which the symbolic translation is imprinted on the heart of the receiver.

Mouth-to-mouth *wahy* is restricted to the prophets of Allāh, as well as a few individuals whose degree of *walāyah* and *ʿubūdiyyah* are at the degree of a prophet. That is, *wahy* is a gift given only to those who have been appointed to prophethood or who have reached a comparable degree of *walāyah*. Through this kind of *wahy* a prophet is given direct instructions for his mission. For some prophets, parts of the message are meant to be written down and distributed to others. The revealed books of Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Jesus, and the Prophet of Islam among others, fit into this category.

Mouth-to-mouth revelation is not restricted to men. In the Qurʾān, at least two women are mentioned who have received this mouth-to-mouth *wahy*: Mary the mother of Jesus (Q 19:17) and the mother of Moses (Q 20:38). Neither was a prophet, but each had a rank of *walāyah* comparable to the rank of a prophet.

2 Inspiration (Ilhām)

The second kind of *wahy* involves a kind of light that reaches the heart, and which the receiver then interprets to understand what it is that Allāh wants. The key difference between mouth-to-mouth revelation and inspirational revelation is that the former contains a precise symbolic translation of that which has descended from the *Mashiʾah*, whereas inspiration requires an interpretation, on the part of the receiver, of the light that has landed upon his or her heart.

Inspiration is a means by which Allāh speaks to all of creation, humans, animals, and plants included; even stones. We may say that Allāh speaks to all things through inspiration, and to the prophets and a select few others through mouth-to-mouth revelation.



Earlier, in the Exordium (see the marginal note on page 11), we described the expressions and meanings of the Qurʾān in terms

of a *specific stream of consciousness*. That is, regardless of what one thinks of the phenomenon of revelation, there can be no denying that the expressions and meanings which constitute the Qurʾān are very markedly distinct from anything else the Prophet of Islam expressed. In secular psychology that phenomenon might be understood in terms of a specific stream of consciousness.

But even from the Islamic perspective, the expression 'specific stream of consciousness' is appropriate. Recall that the white pillar of the Empyrean is the pillar of Universal Consciousness and the *Pen (Qalam)*. When Allāh commands something in this world through His *Mashiʾah (Wish)*, it descends to the Empyrean, from where the Pen, using the ink of *Nūn*, writes it to the Preserved Tablet:

*Rather, it is a Glorious Recital;
In a Preserved Tablet. [85:21-22]*

From the Preserved Tablet it is sent down to the heart of the Prophet through the angelic messenger Gabriel. This sending down from the Preserved Tablet, the very soul of creation, to the heart of the Prophet; and from his heart (that is, from the seat of his own consciousness) to his tongue, is precisely a specific stream of consciousness.

At this point, it is important to distinguish between two types of sending down: *inzāl* (making to descend at once) and *tanzil* (making to descend gradually). From the perspective of *inzāl*, the Qurʾān was sent down in one night:

*Surely we made it descend (inzāl) in the Night of Power.
[97:1]*

*Surely we made it descend (inzāl) in a Blessed Night.
[44:3]*

But from the perspective of *tanzil*, it was slowly revealed over the twenty-three years of the Prophet's mission:

In truth we made it descend (inzāl), and in truth it descended. And we have not sent you except as a bringer of glad tidings and a warner;

Even stones: Remember that Islam offers a variant of panpsychism (see the marginal note on page 150). Recall Q 17:44

There is not a single thing except that it glorifies through praising Him, but you all do not understand their glorification.

The Night of Power is one of the last odd-numbered nights of the lunar month of Ramadan, the month of fasting.

A Recital (Qurʾān) which we have divided so that you may recite it to the people intermittently so that they await more: And We made it descend progressively (tanzil). [17:105-106]

Ch

At first, the Qurʾān is revealed all at once (Q 17:105): *we made it descend (inzāl)*. Then the Qurʾān is divided and revealed in stages (Q 17:106): *And we made it descend progressively (tanzil)*.

The *inzāl* of the Qurʾān is from the *Mashīʾah* to the Preserved Tablet to the heart of the Prophet:

The Trustworthy Spirit descended with it;

Upon your heart so that you may become one of the warners. [26:194]

From the heart of the Prophet, the Qurʾān, again through the agency of the angel, gradually and over twenty-three years descended from the heart of the Prophet to his tongue. Through the angel, the symbolic translation from the Preserved Tablet was kept perfectly intact. That is, the Prophet did not interpret what was in his heart, and then deliver that interpretation (although the complete interpretation and understanding of the Qurʾān was there); rather he just waited for the angel to periodically bring it forth as a precise symbolic translation from the Preserved Tablet, which he then presented to the people.



IMPORTANT NOTE: It is not the case, in Islām, that the Qurʾān is the sum total of the revelation sent to the Prophet. Allāh revealed many things to the Prophet which do not constitute parts of the Qurʾān. That is, the mouth-to-mouth revelation received by the prophet includes the Qurʾān, but is not restricted to the Qurʾān. The commandments left by the Prophet, as well as his explanations regarding the meanings of the Qurʾān, are in principle as authoritative as the Qurʾān itself. This is because:

And he does not speak out of his own inclinations.

Indeed, it [his speaking] is naught but a revelation revealed. [53:3-4]

So no! By your Cherisher and Lord, they will not [truly] be dynamically believing until they make you the judge with regards to the disputes that arise between them; and then find in their selves no bad attitude about what you have decided, and give their full and total assent (taslim). [4:65]

All of the guidance, commandments, prohibitions, and recommendations of the Prophet are an integral part of the total revelation. The Qurʾān is a very specific and specialized part of that revelation: It constitutes the foundation and center of Islām about which the rest of Allāh's revelations to the Prophet revolves.



The nature of the Qurʾān, its language, themes, and narratives; its organization, divisions, the manners and etiquette of its recitation; the history of its gradual descent over the period of the Prophet's mission, its collection into a single volume; its manners of commentary and interpretation; these are all issues that we cannot adequately address here, and they deserve a volume of their own. Our primary objective here is the situating of revelation in general, and the Qurʾān in particular, in the overall cosmological scheme.

In Islām, the chief miracle of the Prophet of Islām is the Qurʾān. Many different avenues to demonstrate the miraculous nature of the Qurʾān have been adduced over the centuries, from its unique efficiency and unsurpassed eloquence of language, to its correct prediction of future events, to its numerical features, and many more. We cannot address all this here. What we can do is encourage the reader to read the Qurʾān for himself or herself. Although the language of the Book is notoriously difficult (most would say impossible) to translate, there are reasonable translations available which, in conjunction with some of the definitions and principles given in this modest work, may help the reader on his or her way.

We will leave the reader with a single *ḥadīth* of the Prophet, wherein he describes the Qurʾān in the course of a speech. Imām

To this author, the most useful translation of the Qurʾān (particularly for those new to the Book) is the original translation of Abdullah Yusuf Ali (including his notes and appendices). Despite its many deficiencies (and no translation is free of them), the depth of the overall spirit conveyed by this translation stands in a class of its own. At least two so-called "revised" Yusuf Ali translations, completed decades after the death of the translator, are available as well: they largely kill the spirit of the original and offer little in return to the reader except for dry and worn out twigs.

Ṣādiq narrates from his father Imāmī Bāqir, who narrates from his father ḌAli ibn Ḥusayn, who narrates from his father Ḥusayn ibn ḌAli, who narrates from his father ḌAli ibn Abi Ṭālib, who narrates as follows:

Ch

The Messenger of Allah (S) said: "O people! You are in a house of truce [the immediate life]; you are in the middle of a journey, and the passage with you is quick! You have surely seen night and day, sun and moon, together wear out every new thing, bringing close everything that is far; they will come forth with every [natural and divine] promise. So prepare your provisions for crossing the bridge!"

Then [his companion] Miqdād ibn al-ʿAswad stood up and asked, "O Messenger of Allah! And what is the house of truce?"

He replied: "A house of announcement and coming to an end". So when trials and confusions take a hold of you like getting lost on a dark night, then hold fast to the Qurʾān, for it is an intercessor whose intercession will be accepted, and a complainant whose word will be accepted as true. Whoever puts it in front of him: it will [intercede for him and] lead him to the Garden; whoever puts it behind him: it will [complain against him and] drive him to the Fire.

The Qurʾān is the guide that indicates the best of paths; it is a book within which is explanation, clarity, and realization; it is the criterion and not an amusement. It has an outer aspect and an inner aspect: Its outer aspect is a firm authority; its inner aspect is knowledge. Its outer aspect is pleasing and delightful; its inner aspect is profound and deep.

It has stars [of meaning], and beyond its stars are more stars. Its wonders cannot be counted; its marvels never wear out. In it are lanterns of guidance, a lamp of wisdom, and a guide to cognizance to the one who cognizes the description. So let the polisher polish his vision, and let his observation reach the description⁶! The Qurʾān saves the one who would otherwise perish; it frees the one who is entangled. For surely reflective meditation is the life of the heart of the one with vision, just as a walker with a light walks in the

A house of announcement and coming to an end: This is like a truce. First it is announced, then you have time to get your act together, then the truce comes to an end and you had better be ready. ... a guide to cognizance to the one who cognizes the description: The cognizance is cognizance of Allah.

⁶ As for the description, it is a secret to the cognizance of Allah to which the Prophet is alluding. We will not reveal the secret here, except to say that the description (*ṣifāh*) is a special *walāyah* that constitutes the very axis (*quṭb*) of the Qurʾān.

darkness. So become beautifully free of entrapments and have few interruptions!

5.5 Humanity must have a reference point of *walāyah*.

The phenomenon of revelation is closely tied to the phenomenon of prophethood (*nubuwwah*). The one appointed to the position of *nubuwwah* is a prophet (*nabiyy*). Although it is customary to use 'prophethood' and 'prophet' to translate '*nubuwwah*' and '*nabiyy*' respectively, it is worth considering the Arabic expressions a little more closely.

There are two possible roots for '*nubuwwah*' and '*nabiyy*'. First is *n b ʿ*. This root connotes "giving news and information". On this view, a *nabiyy* or prophet is one who is informed of and receives news. This includes predictions of the future, including both good news or glad tidings on the one hand, and warnings on the other. For example:

Surely we sent you with the Truth as a bringer of glad tidings and a warner. [2:119]

Most importantly, a prophet is informed of the *tawḥīd* of Allah in His Essence, Attributes, and Actions. He is given commandments to follow and carry out on behalf of Allah.

The other view sees the word '*nabiyy*' as being derived from *n b w*, which connotes "becoming elevated or raised high". On this view, a prophet is someone raised to a very high rank of spiritual *walāyah* and who, in addition, is appointed to a very high station of responsibility, beyond that of the rest of the people. That is, a prophet is not a soothsayer, or merely an informer or prophesier, but someone with a high station and the most honored appointment:

He [the prophet ʿIḍris] was truthful, a prophet (nabiyy); And we raised him to a high station. [19:56-57]

In this interpretation, the second *āyah* explains the meaning of the word '*nabiyy*' in the first *āyah*: A Prophet is someone who has been appointed to a very high station of responsibility. It is important to note that not everyone who reaches the highest

stages of spiritual *walāyah* – such a person is a *waliyy* of Allāh – is necessarily appointed as a prophet. From those who have achieved the highest ranks of *Imān* and spiritual *walāyah*, Allāh chooses whomever he wishes to take the responsibilities of the high station of prophethood.

Both derivations of 'nabiyy' and 'nubuwwah' are acceptable, and each has supporting evidence. The following working definition of "nabiyy" takes into account both possibilities: *A prophet is a waliyy of Allāh who is appointed to a very high position and mission that involves being precisely informed of that which Allāh wishes and desires, without the intermediary of any other mortal.*

What is wished and desired includes *tawhīd* as well as moral, ritual and/or legal commandments. Thus it is possible to receive revelation but still not be a prophet.⁶

Based on a number of reliable *aḥādith* we can consider the types of prophethood. A prophet may fall into one or more of the following ranks:

1 Prophet (Nabiyy)⁶

A prophet in the most limited sense receives information and news about the *tawhīd* of Allāh. If he is given specific moral, ritual, or legal commandments, then he is generally forbidden from sharing these with others outside of himself and perhaps his immediate family.

The prophet in this sense may receive news and information in one of two ways: He may see an angel during his sleep, or he may hear an angel while awake but not actually see the angel. One who has this kind of interaction with the angel is called "*muhaddath*" ("one given news"). A prophet in the limited sense is *muhaddath*.

One may be *muhaddath* without being a prophet, as we shall mention below;

2 Messenger (Rasūl)

A messenger receives information about *tawhīd*. In addition, he is given a mission to a people or community that involves specific moral, ritual, or legal commandments. In the case of the messengers *possessing firm decision* (*ulū āl-'azm*) (such as

Muhammad (S), Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus) a book meant for distribution may be revealed, plus a complete code of living including morals, ritual, and law.

In addition to the way a prophet in the limited sense may receive information, a messenger may see the angel – and an angel may appear in the visible world through some recognizable form – while awake.

It is also possible that someone see the angel of revelation without being a prophet. The case of Mary, the mother of Jesus, comes to mind.⁶

Finally, angels are also called "messengers" of Allāh in the Qur'²an. Emyrean and celestial forces and heralds aside, prophethood is a precondition for messengership. Every human messenger of Allāh is a prophet but not every prophet of Allāh is a messenger;

3 Leader (Imām)

Sometimes a prophet or messenger is appointed to be a *leader* (*imām*). In this case he is given temporal authority, guardianship, and leadership. The word 'imām' is a part of standard English vocabulary so we will use that term here. The case of Abraham is a prime example of a messenger who is also an imām. According to a *ḥadīth* narrated by Imām Ṣādiq:

Surely Allāh, magnified and exalted, took Abraham as an adorer-servant before taking him as a prophet. And surely Allāh took him as a prophet before taking him as a messenger. And surely Allāh took him as a messenger before taking him as an intimate friend. And surely Allāh took him as an intimate friend before making him an imām. When He gathered these things within Abraham He said,

Surely I am making you an imām for the people.
[2:124]

Another messenger was Lot, the nephew of Abraham. Although he was a messenger, Lot was not an imām, but undertook his mission under the leadership of Abraham. Aaron was also a messenger, but under the leadership of Moses.

⁶ See Q 19:17–21. It is a matter of controversy as to whether Mary was a prophet, although there is no question about her superior rank of *walāyah*, which was arguably even greater than that of many prophets. If our working definition, based on the early sources of Islamic cosmology, is correct, then she was not a prophet, for her encounter with the angel (while awake) was designed to inform her of the birth of a son, not a special message of *tawhīd* or a code of living.

⁶ For example: This was the case with the mother of Moses. It was revealed to her (Q 20:38) that she should place him in a small boat to float down the river Nile, and that he would be picked up by the Egyptian Pharaoh of that time. In this case the subject matter is not the *tawhīd* of Allāh or His general commandments concerning morals, ritual, and/or law.

⁶ Here the word 'nabiyy' is being used to mention its first degree, as is common in Islamic terminology. See TSP, page 39.

It is possible for a person to be an imām without being a prophet or a messenger. Divine leadership, like prophethood, is a specific appointment (as Q 2:124 makes clear). In some individuals these functions are combined and in others they are separate. In the case of an imām who is not a prophet or messenger, then he is *muhaddath*.

The Prophet of Islām also combined prophethood, messengership, and leadership. According to the Qurʾān, Muḥammad (Ṣ) is the final prophet:

[He is] the Messenger of Allāh and the Seal of the Prophets. [33:40]

There is no other prophet after Muḥammad (Ṣ). Since prophethood is a necessary condition of messengership, there is no messenger after the Messenger of Allāh. Divinely-appointed leadership, however, is another matter: It is *not* dependent *per se* upon prophethood or messengership. For example: It is consecutively transmitted⁶ throughout the Ḥadīth literature of Islām that Allāh will appoint a descendant of the Prophet of Islām as the *Guided One (Mahdi)* who will lead the human race to equity and justice after it is filled with tyranny and oppression. The Mahdi is not a prophet or messenger; however, he is an imām, a divinely appointed leader. He does not bring a new message or law, but unfolds the meanings and applications of the Final Message brought by the Seal of the Prophets.

IMPORTANT NOTE: The word 'imām' has other uses as well. The word may be used in the generic sense "leader", as in the conventional leader of a tribe, family, or community. It may also be used in the particular sense "leader of the communion": When communion or *ṣalāh* is performed collectively, one of the congregation is appointed as the imām to lead the rest. The word 'imām' is also popularly used to designate a highly accomplished and/or influential Muslim scholar.



We will not give a detailed account of the life and mission of the Prophet of Islām in this work. As we mentioned in the Exordium, it is our intention to present the essence of Islām in a

trans-historical manner as much as possible (see page 16). This is not to say that the history is unimportant. Indeed, the need for an objective and accurate biography of the Prophet for Western readers is perhaps more acute now than ever before. On the other hand, the Prophet may be understood through the Qurʾān, his own example, and from reliable *ahādīth*, whether transmitted through his Family or through his Companions. In this work we have mentioned numerous *ahādīth* whose meanings collectively represent something of who Muḥammad (Ṣ) was.

In a future augmentation of this work we hope to say a few words about the life and mission of the Messenger of Islām. At this point, we would only like to make a couple of important cosmological points about prophethood in general and of the Prophet of Islām in particular.



The first point is that the purpose of prophethood, messengership, and leadership is to provide a *proof (hujjah)* to the human race of its responsibilities of 'ubūdiyyah and ultimate *walāyah* to Allāh, as well as the responsibilities of mutual relative *walāyah*-relationships with one another. That is, the fundamental purpose of these divinely appointed offices is to provide a firm sign that human beings will recognize so that they will understand the meaning of the *āyah*:

There! all walāyah to Allāh the Real. [18:44]

Put another way: we must cognize that Allāh is the origin and ultimate source of *walāyah*, that He loves, cherishes, and provides for us; that our life and death are in His hands; that *tawḥīd* and ultimate *walāyah* are due to Him; and that we must cognize the proper and most efficient way of giving *walāyah* to him. This includes the development of *ma'rifah* and cosmological *walāyah*, the cultivation of morals and spiritual *walāyah*, the learning of the formal structures of ritual adoration and service (such as communion and fasting), and the obligations, prohibitions, and recommendations that we must follow in order to achieve justice within ourselves, our families, and throughout society.

We mentioned earlier the *ḥadīth*:

In the Qurʾān at least one imām who was not a prophet is mentioned: Dhū al-Qarnayn (an account of him is given in Q 18:83-98). The exact identity of Dhū al-Qarnayn is hard to pin down, but we can dismiss the popular conception that he was Alexander the Great. By all accounts he was a divinely guided ruler but not a prophet. Some *ahādīth* say that he was a ruler in the immediate generations after the Flood of Noah, but little else is known for certain.

⁶ We discussed the meaning of 'consecutively transmitted' earlier, at the beginning of Principle 2.2.

In this author's view, there is no truly satisfactory biography of the Prophet available for Western readers.

It is not the right of Allāh over creation that they cognize Him. Rather, it is the right of creation over Allāh that He make them cognizant of Him. Then it is Allāh's right over creation – after He has made them cognizant of Him – that they accept and respond to Him.

Along with the books of the macrocosm and microcosm, the prophets, messengers and leaders provide mankind with an important proof of their responsibilities, so that the people would not have a complaint against Allāh later:

Messengers: bringers of glad tidings and warners, so that humanity would not have a proof against Allāh after the messengers. [4:165]

Once an atheist came to Imām Šādiq and asked him about the need for prophethood and messengership. The imām gave the following reply, which beautifully summarizes the Islāmic point of view of the prophets and messengers as proofs of Allāh:

Once we have affirmed that:

- 1 *'We have a Creator and Fashioner transcendent to us and to the rest of creation; and that*
- 2 *The Fashioner is Wise and Transcendent so that it is not permissible that He make Himself directly visible to His creation [because He is Transcendent] – that is, they cannot touch Him, He does not come into direct contact with them nor can they come into direct contact with Him; He does not directly contend with them nor do they directly contend with Him;*

Then it is affirmed that He has ambassadors to His creation [because it is their right over Him that they be made aware of their responsibilities]. They express to and inform His creation and adorer-servants on His behalf; they guide them to that which is in their best interest, that which benefits them, and that through which, in adhering to it lies their survival, and in abstaining from it lies their annihilation.

So the existence of those who command and forbid in His creation on behalf of the All-knowing and Wise One is affirmed, those who express to and inform them on His behalf. Mighty and Majestic is He! They are the Prophets, upon whom be peace, and the Elect from His creation:

- 1 *wise, disciplined in wisdom, sent out to expound wisdom;*
- 2 *not sharing with the rest of creation – aside from being created and sharing the same [corporeal, mortal] composition – anything else of their circumstances and deficiencies [such as committing sins];*
- 3 *aided by the All-knowing Wise One with wisdom.*

Then this [the three qualities above] is affirmed in every age and time in which the Messengers and Prophets have brought proofs and demonstrations. This is so that Allāh's earth would never be devoid of a proof, and there is always with that proof a signal⁶ which shows the truth of his claim and the fact of his justice and veracity.

Allāh is Transcendent and Wise. Because He is Transcendent and beyond location and boundaries, Allāh and creation do not directly touch or otherwise contact one another:

It is not for any mortal that Allāh speak to him except through wahy: either [He symbolically speaks] from behind a veil or He sends a messenger to symbolically speak (wahy) what He wishes. [42:51]

Because He is Wise, He did not create humanity in vain. Furthermore, humanity has a right for Allāh to show them the way to attain cognizance of Him, and to show them that wherein lies its perpetual felicity and that wherein lies its misery and destruction.

Thus the transcendence and wisdom of Allāh together entails the sending of ambassadors commensurate with creation in their composition and mortality, thus facilitating clear communication and mutual understanding:

...the Elect: The expression 'the Elect' is used to mention the divinely appointed Imams (like *Thā al-Qar-nayn* – see page 184 and the marginal note) – as well as the prophets and messengers.

⁶ Signal: This signal includes those clear signs which are commonly called miracles. In the case of Islām, the miracle of the Prophet of Islām is the Qur'ān, and the guidance he left behind. See the next marginal note.

If 'We had made him [the Prophet] an angel we would still have had to make him [that angel] a man, and clothe him [inwardly and outwardly] in that which you are clothed. [6:9]

If there were angels walking naturally upon the earth [instead of people] then we would have sent down upon them from the sky a messenger that was an angel. [17:95]

Yet, the prophets, messengers and imāms sent by Allāh do not share the deficiencies of the rest of creation; this is so that they can provide a solid and reliable example to creation:

Surely, there is for you in the Messenger of Allāh a beautiful example. [33:21]

Allāh is Wise: The prophets are sent because of His wisdom. Therefore, they are *imprints (āthar)* and manifestations of Allāh's wisdom, something emphasized in the above narration.

Finally, each prophet is given some clear signs by means of which he may convince the particular group to whom he was sent of the veracity of his claim. For example: The people of Moses were enamored with magic, so the signs or miracles given to Moses reflected that to which the people could relate.

This summarizes the Islāmic cosmology of prophethood, messengership, and leadership.



Finally, a word on the role of Muḥammad (Ṣ), the Prophet of Islām, in Islāmic cosmology. As we have said on more than one occasion (for example, beginning on page 152), the creation of Allāh is structured on the basis of *walāyah*-relationships; nothing whatsoever stands alone as an isolated atom. Good people develop healthy relative *walāyah*-relationships with good people; evil doers build unhealthy relative *walāyah*-relationships with other evil people.

Healthy relative *walāyah*-relationships are a direct extension of each party's ultimate *walāyah*-relationship with Allāh. Obedience to parents is part of returning *walāyah* to Allāh, that is, part of *'ubūdiyyah*. Guardianship and care of one's children is

Humanity must have a reference point of *walāyah*.

part of *'ubūdiyyah*. In principle, love of family, tribe, or homeland is part of *'ubūdiyyah* to Allāh. All of these and other relative *walāyah*-relationships are a part of returning *walāyah* to Allāh, with one stipulation: No relative *walāyah*-relationship is to be taken as absolute. Once one absolutizes a relative *walāyah*-relationship, one commits *shirk* (see Subprinciple 4.3.8).

Thus one must obey one's parents except in injustice or disharmony with Allāh's *rubūbiyyah*. One must love and protect one's children, family, tribe, and homeland, but not at the expense of even the slightest injustice to others. To do so removes one from the *walāyah* of Allāh to the *walāyah* of Iblis the Satan. According to the cosmology of the Qur'ān: *All walāyah-relationships ultimately reduce to one of two: the ultimate, true walāyah of Allāh or the ultimate, illusory walāyah of Satan. The Qur'ān emphasizes this point in a number of places:*

Allāh is the waliyy (comforter) of those who are dynamically believing; he takes them from darkness into light. And those who cover the truth: their awliyā' (comforters) are the principals of rebellion. ⁶ [2:257]

Those who cover the truth fight in the way of Tāghūt: So fight the awliyā' of the Satan! Surely the plots and snares of the Satan are weak. [4:76]

Whoever takes the Satan as a waliyy in lieu of Allāh has surely suffered a very great and manifest loss! [4:119]

The plots and snares of Satan are weak, because the Satan is the principal purveyor of illusions:

I will make that which is in the Earth appear beautiful to them [the children of Adam], and I will surely seduce them with illusions, the whole lot of them!

Except for those given and chosen for sincerity⁶ from amongst your adorer-servants. [15:39-40]

We [the leaders of oppression and rebellion] showed you [our followers] illusions, and we ourselves were deluded. [37:32]

⁶ ...principals of rebellion (Tāghūt): The word in the Qur'ān is the collective noun 'Tāghūt'. This name is used to mention every power and force, real or imaginary, that sets itself up (real) or is set up (imaginary) as a focal point of *walāyah* outside of Allāh's *walāyah* and guidance. At the pinnacle of Tāghūt is the Satan, Iblis (as Q 2:26 points out). Included in Tāghūt is every source, system, and institution of oppression and rebellion against the *walāyah* of Allāh. To give willingly *walāyah* to Tāghūt in any way counts as *shirk* (see Subprinciple 4.3.8).

⁶ ...those given and chosen for sincerity: Sincerity is *ikhlas*. See TSP, Subprinciple 2.5.4.

In addition: The *walāyah* of Iblis is ultimately weak because, at the end of the day, those who choose the *walāyah* of the Satan finally turn upon one another and the Satan turns against them. This is analogous to what happens when a gang of thieves or mobsters is broken up; everyone tries to make a deal with the prosecutor to save his own skin, forgetting the vows and promises made to one another:

"When the matter has been decided [that is, when the 'Day of Judgement arrives], the Satan will say [to those who took him as their waliyy]: 'I had no authority over you all [to force you into anything], except that 'I called you and you responded to me. So don't blame me but blame yourselves. [14:22]

Those who were weak will say to those who were strong, "If not for you we would have been dynamically believing!"

Those who were strong will say to those who were weak, "Did we hinder you from following the guidance after it came to you? Rather, you yourselves were sinners!" [34:31-32]

When those who were followed disassociate themselves from those who followed them...

Then those who followed them will say, "If only we had another cycle [of life] then we would disassociate from them the way they now disassociate from us!" [2:166-167]

Negative *walāyah* and disassociation – recall Principle 2.6.1 – from *Tāghūt* and every principal that promotes the ultimate *walāyah* of anything in lieu of Allāh is thus inseparable from positive ultimate *walāyah* to Allāh. One must choose one's apparently relative *walāyah*-relationships very carefully, for every relative *walāyah*-relationship is, at the end of the day, either in the absolute *walāyah* of Allāh or the absolute *walāyah* of *Tāghūt*; that is, of the Satan and all other principals and powers that actively violate and call upon others to violate the *walāyah* of Allāh:

Humanity must have a reference point of *walāyah*.

O you who have dynamically believed! 'Do not take those who cover the truth as comforters (awliyā') in lieu of those who are dynamically believing! [4:144]

O you who have dynamically believed! 'Do not take those who treat your dīn with derision and as a joke as comforters, whether they are among those who were given revelation before you [that is, Jews and Christians] or whether they are from among those who cover the truth. [5:57]

Those who engage in kufr: They are awliyā' (participants in the walāyah) of one another. [8:73]

The dynamically believing men and dynamically believing women: They are awliyā' (participants in the walāyah) of one another. [9:71]

But the mutual *walāyah* of those who engage in *kufr* is ultimately illusory, and finally ends in mutual recrimination and disassociation.

For the Muslim, the most important relative *walāyah*-relationship is that provided by the Prophet of Islām, Muḥammad (ﷺ):

Say [O Prophet]: 'If you have come to love Allāh then follow me! Allāh will love you and forgive your faults for you; and Allāh is Very-Forgiving, Particularly-Merciful. [3:31]

The love of the Prophet is thus the love of Allāh, and the obedience of the Prophet is the obedience of Allāh. Put succinctly: giving relative *walāyah* to the Prophet is a part of giving ultimate *walāyah* of Allāh.

Furthermore, the *walāyah* of the Prophet over those who are dynamically believing is fundamental. The Prophet is to the dynamically believing as the sun is to the earth, as the earth is to the moon, as a father or mother is to their child. This is because:

The Prophet has more walāyah with the dynamically believing than they have over themselves... [33:6]

And we have not sent you except as a mercy to all the worlds. [21:107]

That is, the Prophet loves the people of *Imān* more than they love themselves, and he cherishes them more than they cherish themselves. Furthermore, he has more right over them than they have over themselves, and he has more authority over them than they have over themselves. The twin aspects of dynamic loving and guardianship characterize the position of the Prophet with respect to the dynamically believing.

Regarding the first aspect: Recall that the Mercy of Allāh is none other than His Universal *Walāyah* (see page 128). The Prophet of Islām is the point of reference where that Divine Mercy is manifested. That is, the Prophet is the *locus* of Universal *Walāyah*. Allāh manifests his Ultimate Mercy to humanity through the creation of a local mercy. That local mercy is the Prophet of Islām, the manifestation of the Divine Mercy.

As the *Leader* (*Imām*) of the community, the Prophet is characterized as the following *ḥadīth* from the Family of the Prophet explains:

The Imām is the intimate friend, the compassionate father, the close twin brother, the mother tender to her small child, the refuge of the adorer-servants in misfortunes and calamities...

That is, the Prophet loves and cares for the dynamically believing more than they love and care for themselves.

Regarding the second aspect: From the inclusiveness of *walāyah* we understand that the guardianship and authority of the Prophet is not restricted. *Every aspect of life is included:*

So no! By your Cherisher and Lord, they will not [truly] be dynamically believing until they make you the judge with regards to the disputes that arise between them; and then find in their selves no bad attitude about what you have decided, and give their full and total assent. [4:65]

This commandment is general. All worldly and spiritual affairs are to be referred back to Allāh through the Prophet. Furthermore:

And obey Allāh and the Messenger, in order that you may be given mercy [3:132]

Thus the receipt of Allāh's special mercy is dependent upon giving *walāyah* to the Messenger, including obeying him.

This superior *walāyah* that the Prophet maintains over the people of *Imān* may be encapsulated in one word, '*mawlā*'. The word '*mawlā*' means "the locus or reference point about which *walāyah* is done". The Supreme, Ultimate *Mawlā*, of course, is Allāh:

And if they receive another walāyah then know you all that Allāh is your locus of walāyah (mawlā). What an excellent locus of walāyah, what an excellent helper! [8:40]

As the locus of the Mercy of Allāh (*And we have not sent you except as a mercy*) the Prophet is thus the locus of the Universal *Walāyah* of Allāh to the world in general and to those who respond to His *walāyah* in particular. That is, the Prophet of Islām is the *mawlā* of humanity in general and of the people of *Imān* in particular.

Put another way: In a relative *walāyah*-relationship, one party may be said to have *more walāyah* with the other (that is, to be *awlaa* with the other – the phrase 'has more *walāyah*' translates '*awlaa*', used in Q 33:6.). The sun and earth both love one another (through their mutual attraction), but the sun has more *walāyah* with the earth (through its more powerful field of gravity); that is, the sun is *awlaa* with the earth. As a result, the earth orbits the sun and the sun is the relative locus and reference point for the *walāyah* projected by the earth as well as for the sun's own primary *walāyah* with respect to the earth. Similarly, the earth has more *walāyah* with the moon; it is *awlaa* with the moon. Thus the earth is the relative locus or reference point for the *walāyah* projected by the moon as well as for the earth's own primary *walāyah*. That is, the sun is the *mawlā* of the earth and the earth is the *mawlā* of the moon.

Now the Prophet, according to Q 33:6, *has more walāyah with the dynamically believing than they have over themselves*. Therefore, in analogy with the above two examples, he is the reference point and locus of the *walāyah* of the people of *Imān* and dynamic belief. That is, he is the *mawlā* of the dynamically believing.

Ch

The word 'locus' is used to mention the place where something is situated or where an activity occurs.

One of the titles of the Prophet is 'the Imām of Mercy'. This name occurs in a supplication by 'Alī ibn Husayn, the great-grandson of the Prophet and the foremost of the generation following the Companions.

See TSP, Principle 2.6 for a discussion of the distinction between general love and *walāyah* and specific or particular love and *walāyah*.

5

From here the *walāyah* of the Prophet extends to the best of the people of *Imān*:

Ch 5

Surely your only comforters (waliyy) are Allāh and His Messenger, as well as those who have dynamically believed, the ones who stand for communion and give of the pruning of their wealth while engaged in bowing.

And whoever receives the walāyah of Allāh, His Messenger, and those who have dynamically believed: Then surely the party of Allāh are the victorious ones! [5:55-56]



Humanity is always in need of a reference point and locus of *walāyah*, of a *mawla*. Out of His Transcendence and Wisdom Allāh sent prophets, messengers, and/or imāms to warn and guide humanity. As the *Seal of the Prophets* [33:40], the Prophet of Islām is the *Waliyy* (Comforter), the Messenger of Allāh, the Proof of Allāh, the Mercy of Allāh, and the *Leader* (Imām) of the Muslim community in particular and of humanity in general.

Thus Muḥammad (S) is the reference point and locus of *walāyah*: To love him is to love Allāh; to love those whom he loves is to love Allāh. To obey him is to obey Allāh; to obey those whom he commands to obey is to obey Allāh. And to disassociate from those he disassociates from is to disassociate from the *Jāghūt* who rebel against and summon others to the violation of the *walāyah* of Allāh.

That is: To give *walāyah* to him is to give *walāyah* to Allāh; to give *walāyah* to those whom he has commanded *walāyah* to be given is to give *walāyah* to Allāh.

In short, he is the general *mawla* of humanity and the specific *mawla* of the people of *‘ubūdiyyah*.



⁷The people of *‘ubūdiyyah*: That is, those who constantly and persistently respond positively to the *walāyah* of Allāh.

6 Cognizance of Destiny

6.1 Everything returns to Allāh.

THE FIRST AND FINAL point of *‘ubūdiyyah* is the *ma‘rifah* or cognizance of Allāh, as the Prophet told Abū Dharr,

O Abū Dharr!... Know that the primary point of the adoration-service of Allāh is cognizing Him. It is the primary point before everything else, and nothing else is before it. It is also a solitary point such that nothing is [independently] secondary to it. And it is the remaining point which has no final limit.

In his *aḥad*-ness and *ṣamad*-ness Allāh is Near in His Farness and Far in His Nearness. He is First in His Last-ness and Last in His First-ness:

...the First and the Last; the Manifest and the Hidden. [57:3]

Through His *Mashi’ah* Allāh brings about the origin and beginning of each and every thing; this is a manifestation of the First-ness of Allāh. And through His *Mashi’ah* He brings about the destiny and destination of each and every thing; this is a manifestation of the Last-ness of Allāh. Thus the cognizance of Allāh involves the cognizance of both origin and destiny. Everything comes from Allāh and everything returns to Allāh:

...Surely we belong to Allāh; and surely towards Him are we returning. [2:156]

Allāh initiates the creation and then repeats it. Then towards Him shall you all be returned. [30:11]

The cognizance of Allāh as Origin and Destination is perhaps the most fundamental theme of the Qur’ān.

In the Qur’ān, quite often Allāh’s existence and His creativity are treated as one issue, namely, the issue of *Imān* (dynamic belief)

SUBTLETY: It is important to remember that the distinction between First-ness and Last-ness takes place only in the *Mashi’ah*, not in the Essence of Allāh. That is, the distinction is a manifestation of Allāh but does not exist within Allāh, because the Attributes of Allāh are identical to His Essence.

in Allāh. This makes sense, because the creativity of Allāh belongs to the *tawhīd* of actions of Allāh. That is, the question of origin forms part of the issue of *tawhīd*. Alongside *ʾīmān* in Allāh one finds the mentioning of *ʾīmān* in the next life (the Last Day). That is, the issue of origin and destination in the Qurʾān is quite often referred to as the issue of *ʾīmān* in Allāh and in the Last Day.

Indeed, as far as *ʾīmān* in general is concerned, in Islām there are ultimately only two fundamental points of belief and conviction: belief in Allāh and belief in the Last Day. Every other Muslim belief, including prophethood and revelation, flows from these two. For example: To believe that Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh involves belief in Allāh. From another perspective, the purpose of prophethood in general and the messengership of Muḥammad in particular is to inform part or all of humanity about *tawhīd* and to inform about the life to come after this one, warning about the final justice there and giving happy news about the final reward there.

On over two dozen occasions in the Qurʾān dynamic belief or placing hope in Allāh and the Last Day are mentioned together. For example:

And when Abraham said, "My Cherisher-Lord! Make this a secure country and provide its people - those who are dynamically believing in Allāh and the Last Day - with fruits!" [2:126]

Surely, there is for you in the Messenger of Allāh a beautiful example for the one who hopes in Allāh and the Last Day, and who often calls Allāh to presence. [33:21]

Surely those who are dynamically believing [in the Prophet and the Qurʾān]; and those who judaize [the Jews], the Nazarenes, and the Sabians:

Whoever has been dynamically believing in Allāh and the Last Day, and has done righteous works, their award is unto their Cherisher-Lord. No fear will be upon them nor will they grieve. [2:62]

As the last *āyah* above alludes, the twin principles of *īmān* in Allāh and *īmān* in the Last Day are recognized as something common to many traditions. Together, faith in Allāh, the Last Day, along

with actualizing that faith through righteous works, is the most basic and general formula for salvation; indeed, the most basic and general formula for Islām in the inclusive sense (see *TSP*, Subprinciple 2.2.2 for a discussion of the different senses of the word 'islām').



The broad complex of issues and questions pertaining to the destiny of the human race in general, and to each individual in particular, belongs to the field of *eschatology*. Of all the ways of life, cosmologies, and traditions of human history, Islām is extraordinarily rich - and arguably the richest - in eschatological information, both in the Qurʾān and in the traditions. To give a fair account of the entire system of Islāmic eschatology would take an entire book. It is our intention to give a fuller account of Islāmic eschatology in a separate work; here we will restrict ourselves to some very brief and fundamental remarks. We will leave out issues pertaining to the last days or next cycle of human history, such as the prophecies and predictions regarding the coming of the Mahdī (mentioned under the heading *Leader* (Imām) on page 183).

There are three basic points in Islāmic eschatology:

- 1 The human being - in particular, the *soul* (Arabic *nafs*) of the human being - survives death. This is not unique to Islāmic eschatology: The great Greek philosophers such as Plato and Plotinus, most Aristotelians (and probably Aristotle himself) also maintained a belief in the post-mortem survival of the soul. Most major traditional religions also hold that the human being survives death in some sense;
- 2 The human being will undergo a full physical resurrection. That is, the soul and spirit of the individual will be reunited with the body that bore him in this life. On this point Islām parts ways with many other eschatological accounts. It also distinguishes itself from most theories of reincarnation or transmigration of souls. In particular, there are three basic ideas concerning what happens after death:

It is interesting to note that Dante's *Divine Comedy* was in large part based upon Islāmic eschatological data, although that data was of course placed in a Christian context.

The word '*nafs*' also means 'self', and we will return to this second meaning towards the end of this section.

Ch

Keep in mind that *ʾīmān* is not identical to belief or faith per se. See *TSP*, Principle 2.3.

For the Sabians, see the marginal note on *TSP*, page 49. For a general discussion of this *āyah* and its context, see the heading *Exclusive and Inclusive* (*TSP*, page 48) in the course of *TSP*, Subprinciple 2.2.2.

Ch

- i The soul maintains a purely spiritual, rational, or immaterial existence after death; any connection with matter or body is permanently severed.
- ii The soul is reborn in another body within this immediate life or cycle of the world. The body may be that of an animal or of another human form; this is reincarnation or transmigration of the soul.
- iii The body which perishes and decays is reconstituted and the soul returns to it; this is physical resurrection.

Generally speaking, Islām is firmly in the third camp with regards to the post-mortem destination of the soul.

- 3 Finally, the human being will be recompensed in the next life for his or her deeds in this life. In the most general sense, this is also commonly held by many if not most traditional cosmologies and philosophies.

We will now say something very brief about each of these points in Islāmī eschatology.

- 6.1.1 *Every human being tastes death; every soul and its spirit survives.*

It is an empirical fact that every human being dies. According to Islām there is no exception to this:

Every soul will taste 'Death; then to 'Us shall you be returned. [29:57]

There are authentic accounts from the Prophet of individuals who have lived or who will live for a very long time; one might even call these figures "immortals". Yet, without exception, every human being will encounter Death.

We sometimes capitalize the word 'Death' because, in Islāmī cosmology, Death is not merely the absence of life but is also a specific creation. Allāh is

The One Who created 'Death and Life in order to test you as to who is the most beautiful in works. [67:2]

Death per se is something beautiful in the Islāmī outlook. In the West, it is often depicted as a frightening skeletal figure with a black cloak and large scythe. In Islām, Death is not depicted as such. To the *Mu'min*, Death appears as something beautiful, in whose grasp lie rest and tranquility; to the *kāfir* – that is, the one who denies, or who, after cognizance, rejects Allāh and the Last Day (see *TSP*, Principle 2.7) – it is an enemy to be avoided and fought at all costs. The dynamically believing recognize the point that, as the Prophet said,

You were not created for annihilation. Rather, you were created for perpetuity. 'It is just that [through 'Death] you are transferred from one home to another.

Indeed, the love of Death is a critical part of *Imān*, as we will discuss in the sequel (*TSP*, under the heading 'Death and the next life' on *TSP*, page 163).



In Islāmī cosmology the human being is made of three components: body, soul (*nafs*), and spirit (*ruh*). The soul is the self that says, "I." The spirit is that energy or wind which animates and enlivens the soul and the body. The body is the corporeal vehicle for both soul and spirit.

In general, being dead is a form of sleep. In both cases the soul actually leaves the body:

Allāh fully receives the souls at the time of their death; and the souls that have not died: [He receives them] in their sleep. Then He takes the ones upon whom 'Death has been decided, and He sends forth the others to a prescribed term. Surely in that are signs for a people who reflectively meditate. [39:42]

This *ayah* may be understood in terms of the distinction between body, soul, and spirit. The following *hadith* narrated by Imām

Bāqir explaining the above *āyah* is quite famous, and its content can be found in other *ahādith* narrated by other Companions and members of the Family:

Ch

There is no one who sleeps except that his soul ascends to the sky and his spirit remains in his body. Then between them [soul and spirit] there comes about a rope like a ray of sunlight. So when Allāh gives permission to gather the spirits [through Death], then the spirit answers the [call of the] soul; and if Allāh gives permission for the spirit to remain, then the souls answers [the call of] the spirit. Allāh says, Allāh fully receives the souls at the time of their death; and the souls that have not died, [He receives them] in their sleep.

⁴ Actually, the *hadith* of Imām 'Ali says that there are a total of five *arwah* (spirits or energies). The first is the spirit of holiness: Only the prophets, messengers, and those of that level of spiritual *walayah* have access to that spirit. This spirit does not wax or wane, unlike the rest. The second is the spirit of *Imān*, which energizes the individual to carry out the process of spiritual *walayah* (discussed in *IS'P*, Chapter 3). The three spirits or energies discussed in the main text are common to all human beings.

It would be interesting to compare and contrast the three bodily energies with the three "treasures" of Taoist thought: *chi* (vitality), *ching* (generative energy or virility), and *shen* (spirit).

When the soul leaves the body during sleep, it maintains a connection to the spirit (a rope like a ray of sunlight). But the spirit is the principle of the life of the body, not the soul per se.

We mentioned earlier (see page 158) that the word '*rūh*' (translated as 'spirit') actually comes from the Arabic word for wind. A *rūh* is a kind of energy that "blows" through the body, and through which the body can move. According to a *hadith* of Imām 'Ali (and confirmed by a number of other *ahādith*), the *rūh* of the individual is actually composed of three *arwah* (spirits or energies).⁴

Yet, for those who reach the highest degrees of *Imān* and *Yaqīn* – discussed at length in the sequel (*IS'P*) – the energies of the body often remain strong right up to time of death. 'Ammār ibn Yāsir, one of the earliest companions of the Prophet, remained a fierce warrior and general right up into his nineties, when he finally died in battle fighting under the leadership of Imām 'Ali. The Prophet often used to pray,

O Allāh! Give us the delight of our sights, our hearings, our energies, and that through which we live, and make them the last inheritor from us!

That is, preserve for us our energies of life until we die.



There is a famous *hadith* of the Prophet of Islām that says,

The people are asleep; when they die they wake up.

And Imām 'Ali is famous for the quote,

Die before you die!

The point is that entering the embrace of Death involves a leap in consciousness. Through Death one directly encounters many things hidden in the Celestial Dominion and/or the Empyrean, things which one may have previously denied, rejected, neglected, or just had simple faith in:

The time for taking the people to account has drawn nigh; yet they are in neglectfulness and are turning away.
[21:1]

You were surely in neglectfulness about this [while you were alive]; we have have now uncovered your veil and your vision today is sharp! [50:22]

It is much better to encounter Death before it comes. This is the station of *Yaqīn*, which we will discuss in the sequel (*IS'P*), along with the process of getting there.



An important facet of the Muslim philosophy of death involves the concept of *martyrdom* (*shahādah*). This is a topic which is closely related to *jihād* (struggle in the cause of Allāh), which in turn falls under the Established Tradition. As we mentioned earlier, we will save a detailed discussion of the Established Tradition for a sequel to this book.

6.1.2 *The body of the human being will be resurrected with its soul and spirit.*

Of all the things that the Messenger of Islām brought, perhaps nothing was more incredulous than the news that, not only will the soul survive death, but the body will be *sent forth* (that is,

Imām 'Ali gave many famous and long sermons exhorting the people to become aware of Death and the realities that lie beyond its embrace.

resurrected) from its tomb and reunited with it! This incredulity is mentioned in the Qurʾān a number of times:

They say, "When we die and have become dust and bones: 'Will we really be sent forth?'" [23:82]

The Qurʾān goes to some length to establish *imān* and *yaqīn* in the principle of the resurrection of the body. Sometimes Allāh refers to His very power to do so:

Does the human being suppose that 'We will never put together his bones?

Rather, indeed we are capable of perfectly assembling the very tips of his fingers! [75:3-4]

Often, the Qurʾān appeals to meditation and contemplation upon the natural world and the demise of past peoples to awaken the hearts at least to the possibility – and hopefully to the reality – of resurrection. Q 50:2-15 provides an excellent example of this approach. Here we provide an excerpt:

"When we die and have become dust [we shall be resurrected]? That is a far-out return!"

...

Have they not observed the sky above them, how we have established it and adorned it, and that there are no tears or breaks in it?

...

And we sent down from the sky a blessed water; through it we caused gardens and harvest grains to grow.

...

A provision for the adorer-servants – through it we give life to a land that is dead: Likewise will be the resurrection!

...

Were 'We then unable to accomplish the first creation? Rather, they are in confusion about a new creation! [50:3, 6, 9, 11, 15]

A more succinct account is provided by Q 29:19,20:

Have they not seen how Allāh originates creation and then repeats it? That for Allāh is easy.

Say: Travel in the earth and see how Allāh began creation. Then Allāh will produce the final creation [of humanity]. Surely Allāh is powerful over each and every thing.

When one reflectively meditates upon the processes of creation in the world, one finds within it the very signs of the resurrection of the bodies. For example: In winter the land becomes dead and devoid of life. In spring, the rain falls and the dead earth becomes alive again. The seeds beneath the ground and the leafless trees are like the dead bodies we leave behind upon death. Then the water of life and *walāyah* falls upon the land, bringing sprouts from the ground and leaves to the trees. This is the general approach the Qurʾān takes to resurrection.

Just as everyone without exception will die, similarly everyone without exception will be resurrected. In a speech to his relatives, the Prophet announced,

Surely the scout does not lie to his own folks. 'By the One Who sent me with the truth! You will all certainly die just as sure as you sleep, and you will all be sent forth (resurrected) just as sure as you wake up from sleep. And there is no home after 'Death except for Garden or 'Fire. And for Allāh, mighty and majestic, the creation of the entire creation, as well as its being sent forth (resurrection), is like the creating and resurrecting of a single soul. Allāh Exalted has said,

Neither your creation nor your being sent forth is like anything other than a single soul... [31:28]

We all come from one single universal or cosmic soul. As that soul returns so do we all return. If any of us were an exception then we would not be part of that cosmic soul.



Recall our discussion of water as the symbol of *walāyah* (Subprinciple 5.1.2).

Surely the scout does not lie to his own folks: This is an Arabic proverb. A scout is someone who looks for herbage and water for his family. It makes no sense for him to lie about finding water or food, for if he does so, he perishes with the rest of his people.

BEGINNING OF PHILOSOPHICAL POINT: The law of cosmic resurrection is related to the cosmology of consciousness, which we also discuss in the sequel (*TSP*) (under *TSP*, Principle 3.1). The fundamental principle of creation is consciousness, as we discussed earlier. From the Cosmic Water Field comes the Empyrean, and from the pillar of white light of the Empyrean comes consciousness (See *TSP*, page 138). Consider the following *ḥadīth*, narrated by Imām Bāqir:

"When Allāh created Consciousness (ʿAql) He made it capable of speech. Then He said to it, "Go back!," and it went back. Then He said, "Come forth!," and it came forth. Then He said, "By my might and majesty! I have not created anything more beloved to me than you. I have not perfected you except in the one whom I love. Indeed! It is you to whom I address my commands, and you to whom I address my prohibitions; it is you to whom I address my retribution, you to whom I address my reward."

Thus Universal Consciousness was sent down from the Empyrean. As it descends it takes upon itself Spirit, Soul, and Nature (for a total of four pillars of the Empyrean). Then Consciousness diffracts into the variegated individual beings. Each of these then is a manifestation of the *ʿAql*, and the individual consciousness of each of us constitutes Universal Consciousness.

Then Allāh asks Consciousness to come forth, that is, to return to Him. As extensions of and participants in Universal Consciousness, our selves, that is, the souls that each say, "I," must all return.

Yet consciousness flows through all things, not just our souls. As Allāh says,

"There is not a single thing except that it glorifies through praising Him, but you all do not understand their glorification." [17:44]

Everything to some degree is conscious of Allāh. That is, everything participates in Universal Consciousness to some degree. Even in the human body: The corpse, when considered distinct from the soul and spirit, has its own degree of consciousness.

Therefore it must also return. The return of the body lies in its resurrection with the soul and spirit.

The word '*nafs*' means both "soul" and "self". The entire human being, spirit, soul, and body, constitutes a single self. Consciousness flows through the entire and whole self during life, not merely the spirit and the soul. And the entire self must return, as the Qurʾān says at a deeper level of meaning:

"Neither your creation nor your being sent forth is like anything other than a single self (nafs)." [31:28]

That is, just as you as an individual, comprised of spirit, soul, and body, constitute a whole self: so also will your return occur as a whole self. Put another way:

"As He initiated you so will you return." [7:29]

You were initiated as a whole self, spirit, soul, and body; so will you also return as a whole self: spirit, soul, and body. END OF PHILOSOPHICAL POINT.



Although there is no doubt that Islām maintains the belief in physical resurrection, there is much dispute over the exact nature of the physical body that returns. We will not get into the details of that here. Analogous to what we did with the issue of free will and predestination (page 163), we will leave the reader with two *ahādīth* which summarize the guidance the Prophet of Islām left on the issue. The first *ḥadīth* is narrated by Imām Ṣādiq:

"The body of the dead is consumed until there remains neither meat nor bone except the primordial clay out of which he was originally created. That primordial clay is not consumed but retains its complete shape in the grave until he is created from it as he was created the first time."

The second *ḥadīth* is narrated by Abū Hurayrah⁶ from the Prophet:

⁶ Abū Hurayrah was one of the most prolific *ḥadīth* narrators from amongst the Companions of the Prophet. Unfortunately, there is evidence that he forged some *ahādīth* on occasion. Hence, his narrations sometimes need to be evaluated in light of other *ahādīth* and in light of the socio-political circumstances in which he lived. There seems no compelling reason to reject this particular narration, however, since its content basically corresponds to the authentic narration from Imām Ṣādiq.

This "diffraction" takes place in the world of motives. See *TSP*, Principle 1.5.

The dust of the earth will consume every part of the son of Adam except for the root of the spine from which he was originally created and composed.

There is also an intermediary world where the soul and spirit reside until the Resurrection. This is the 'Barzakh:

And behind them is an intermediary abode (barzakh) until the day they are sent forth. [23:100]

The Barzakh is very important to Islamic eschatology, but we will not deal with its details here.

This root of the spine is obviously identical to the primordial clay. When Allāh gives the command to renew the creation of the individual, his soul and spirit are brought by the rainwater of *walāyah* to the dead earth in which the primordial clay is located. Thus is the whole human being renewed:

And we sent down from the sky a blessed water,

...

A provision for the adorer-servants – through it we give life to a land that is dead: Likewise will be the resurrection! [50:9, 11]

- 6.1.3 *The human being will be judged; the final destination and abode of the human being is the Garden or the Fire.*

Creation in general, and humanity in particular, was not created in vain or to no avail. Rather, creation and humanity is endowed with meaning and purpose. That purpose is the return of ultimate positive *walāyah*, that is, *‘ubūdiyyah*, to Allāh:

There! all walāyah to Allāh the Real. [18:44]

The very existence of each of us is an outcome of the *walāyah* that comes from Allāh, that is, *rubūbiyyah*. Thus each of us, as a droplet of *walāyah* and *‘ubūdiyyah*, must return to Allāh in order to fulfil our purpose:

Do you then suppose that We just created you all in vain or as a joke, and that you will not be returned to Us? [23:115]

The One Who created Death and Life in order to test you as to who is the most beautiful in works. [67:2]

Through the return to Allāh, each human being is judged with respect to his or her deeds in this immediate life.

Everything returns to Allāh.

After the resurrection – which takes place on the Day of Rising (Yawmu *āl-Qiyāmah*) (the day the souls rise with their renewed bodies) or the Day of Gathering (Yawmu *āl-Hashr*) – the Judgement takes place. On this day – or more precisely, cycle – Allāh shows each of us our deeds:

And whoever performs a mote's weight of goodness shall see it. And whoever performs a mote's weight of badness shall see it. [99:7–8]

Then our deeds are weighed and judged:

So as for the one whose scales are heavy [with good deeds],

Then he will have a very pleasing life.

And as for the one whose scales are light,

Then his abode will be in the Abyss [of Hell]. [101:6–9]

After the judgement, the person will go to either the Garden (Paradise, Heaven) or to the Fire (that is, Hell).



Throughout the Qur'ān there are literally hundreds of *āyāt* describing the Judgement, including the Garden and the Fire. The imagery that the Qur'ān invokes is quite vivid and picturesque. The tranquility and delights of the Garden, as well as the pains and punishments of the Fire, are told and retold throughout the Qur'ān, each time from a slightly different perspective. There is really no substitute to reading the Qur'ān itself in this regard. Putting all the pieces together into a full linear account of Judgement, the Garden and the Fire is a task for another book, as we said before.

The Garden and the Fire are not absolute: each have a number of degrees. For each degree there corresponds a particular group of people:

And to each are degrees with respect to what they have done; to recompense them for what they have done and they will not be treated unjustly. [46:19]

The word 'yawm', which we conventionally translate as 'day', actually means 'cycle' or 'period'. A conventional earth day of twenty-four hours is our most familiar cycle.

Although not mentioned directly in the Qur'an, the Garden has eight levels or degrees.

Ch 6

'It [the Fire] has seven gates: To each gate there is a determined group from among them. [15:44]



In the sequel (*ISP*) we will discuss the spirituality of fear and hope. Fear includes fear of the Fire; hope includes hope for the Garden. Yet Allāh makes it very easy to fill up one's scales of goodness:

'Whoever comes with one beautiful deed then for him [is the reward of] ten like it. And whoever comes with one evil deed then he will not be recompensed except for the equivalent of that act itself; they will not be dealt with unjustly. [6:160]

Once Imām 'Ali observed a man with the signs of fear on his face and said to him, 'What is your situation?' The man replied, "Surely I fear Allāh." The Imām then said,

O adorer-servant! Fear your sins and fear the justice of Allāh upon you with respect to doing injustice to his adorer-servants. Obey Him with regard to what He has made you responsible for, and do not disobey Him in those matters which set you aright. Then, after that, do not fear Allāh.

As we will discuss in detail later (*ISP*, Subprinciple 3.2.6) one should not fret too much over making mistakes in those matters that involve personal shortcomings or weaknesses; Allāh will easily forgive those. The main point is to avoid injustice to others; note that this is mentioned first and foremost. Nothing takes a Muslim to Hell as easily as injustice to others. Everything else is easily forgiven through sincere repentance, even sincere regret.



7 Towards Higher Cognizance

7.1 Ma'rifah has many degrees.

IN THE FINAL CHAPTER of this book we return to the issue of *ma'rifah* and cognizance. The various words and expressions for the exercise of consciousness – each of which signifies a particular aspect of that activity – relate to a larger point about *ma'rifah* or cognizance. Cognizance has many degrees: at its lowest level it is mere *acknowledgement*. At its highest level it is the cognizance of Allāh through the complete negation of any description or attributes. This final stage is a mystical station that lies at the top of the process of spiritual *walāyah*. The stations of *ma'rifah* and cognizance are summarized in a famous sermon of Imām 'Ali:

The beginning of the dīn is acknowledgement (ma'rifah) of Him; the perfection of acknowledgement of Him is confirming (taṣḍīq) [belief in] Him; the perfection of believing in Him is tawhīd of Him; the perfection of tawhīd of Him is sincerity (ikhlās) to Him; and the perfection of sincerity to Him is negating all attributes from Him.

In this context we have translated '*ma'rifah*' as '*acknowledgement*'. As we will discuss at greater length in the sequel (starting in *ISP*, page 39), it is very common in Islāmic terminology that a word be used to mention the first stage of a phenomenon as well as the entire phenomenon. In this case, '*ma'rifah*' is being used to mention just the first stage, acknowledgement. Acknowledgement is also mentioned by use of the word '*iqrār*'. True *ma'rifah*, that is, *Ma'rifah* with a capital 'M', corresponds to the station of the negation of the attributes. Thus *ma'rifah* is the first part of '*ubūdiyyah*', the last part, and everything in between (see the *ḥadīth* narrated by Abū Dharr, page 76).

In this section we will consider only the first two stages, *acknowledgement* (*iqrār*) and *believing* (*taṣḍīq*). The others correspond to higher stations and stages of the journey of spiritual *walāyah*, and we will climb the rest of that ladder in the immediate sequel to this book *Islām, Station, and Process (ISP)*.

7.1.1 *Iqrār involves acknowledgement and simple recognition.*

Acknowledgement is a kind of taking cognizance of something that involves some minimal admission of, acceptance of, or assent to that something. For example: Someone may acknowledge the Pythagorean theorem in mathematics because one was taught it in school, yet not be able to show that it is true. Acknowledgement is perhaps just a step above merely accepting or assenting to that something with little to no reflective meditation or exercise of consciousness. To use our earlier example, it is perfectly reasonable to trust one's mathematics teacher and textbook and accept that the Pythagorean theorem is true, even if one does not have the skill to derive it.

Acknowledgement also has degrees: A somewhat stronger and more formal kind of acknowledgement in English is *recognition*. This involves a fuller realization and comprehension than mere acknowledgement. So a grade-A math student will better recognize the Pythagorean theorem than a grade-D math student, though both will acknowledge it. In the terminology of the Prophet, the Arabic term '*iqrār*' encompasses the full range of acknowledgement and recognition, particularly when that acknowledgement and recognition is followed up by action.

The opposite of acknowledgement and recognition (*iqrār*) is disavowal or denial (*inkār*). Disavowal fundamentally involves a lack or withdrawal of acknowledgement. Specifically, '*inkār*' may refer to the disavowal of something:

- Without knowing whether it really true or not; this is disavowal out of ignorance. An example of this kind of disavowal may be found in the Qurʾān, in the case of those who deny the possibility of resurrection:

And they said: "There is nothing but our immediate life; we die and we live and nothing destroys us but Time." And they have no knowledge of that; they are merely speculating. [45:24]

That is, out of ignorance they disavow and deny that there is any life to come;

- After having previously acknowledged or recognized it; this kind of disavowal in English is called "repudiation" or "rejection;" in Arabic it is *juhūd* (to be discussed under the next sub-principle). In the Qurʾān we read:

They cognize [maʿrifah] the favor of Allāh then they disavow it. [16:83]

That is, their cognizance of Allāh's favor is so weak that at one time they recognize it and at another they do not recognize it.

This kind of cognizance, *iqrār* or acknowledgement, corresponds exactly to *islām* in the limited sense. That is, the minimum level of *maʿrifah* required to enter *islām* is *iqrār* of Allāh, as we will explain in more detail later.

7.1.2 *Tasdiq involves belief, conviction, and confirmation.*

While acknowledgement or recognition is okay, by itself it is a weak and not a very stable or reliable kind of cognizance. A number of *ahādīth* indicate that *iqrār* is the lowest level of cognizance. I give just one example here: In a famous *ḥadīth* relating to *īmān* or dynamic belief, the Prophet said,

'Dynamic belief consists of: acknowledgement (iqrār) with the tongue, cognizance (maʿrifah) with the heart, and action with the limbs.

To expand: One can give lip service to, and even recognize and accept, the Pythagorean Theorem without really having deeper cognizance of what it is one is acknowledging ("acknowledgement with the tongue"). One may study the Pythagorean theorem in high school and forget it in college. Yet if someone else were then to ask the college student, "Do you acknowledge the Pythagorean Theorem as a principle of geometry?", he or she may reply, "Sure!", even if he or she cannot actually remember it or apply it. Or the college student may be able to remember the theorem (reflectively meditating a deeper degree of acknowledgement), but not be able to either:

- Confirm to oneself that it at least works; or

Here by 'cognize' is meant 'acknowledge' and 'recognize', viz. *iqrār*.

We discuss this particular tradition and the general issue of *īmān* more in TSP, Principle 2.3.

- Use it to confirm other principles that may be derived from it.

Ch

PHILOSOPHICAL POINT: *Tasdiq* (confirmation) is thus above mere credence (acceptance based upon mere faith) but still below the stage of knowledge or *yaqin* (objective certainty). In the example mentioned, *yaqin* of the Pythagorean Theorem would be attained when the student is also able to follow the steps of its proof and thus attain knowledge and objective certainty of its truth. With *tasdiq*, one at least has reason to believe, even if, strictly speaking, knowledge is still some ways off.

Until one can at least use the Pythagorean theorem in problems, one has a very limited and perfunctory cognizance of the theorem. A deeper cognizance of the Pythagorean Theorem requires a deeper understanding of geometry. Upon a deeper understanding and cognizance of geometry one can move beyond mere acknowledgement and recognition to a cognizance that is much more firm and useful.

According to the terminology of the Qurʾān and the Prophet, this immediately higher degree of cognizance is *conviction* or *confirmation* (*tasdiq*). This kind of cognizance involves more in the way of evidence and indicators of the object of cognizance. For example: A student may not only recognize the Pythagorean theorem, he may also be able to use the theorem in practical problems and thus confirm it for himself. With *tasdiq* real cognizance or *maʿrifah* begins. According to a *ḥadīth* narrated by Imām Ṣādiq:

... You will not [really] cognize until you confirm (*tasdiq*).

And Imām ʿAlī said,

... The perfection of cognizing Him lies in confirming (*tasdiq*) [belief in] Him.

The opposite of believing or confirming is stubborn rejection (*juhūd*). The term '*juhūd*' is rather difficult to translate. It refers to the rejection of something after the truth of the matter has been made clear or evident by some firm evidence. When one engages in *juhūd*, one is outwardly rejecting or fighting against something even when one actually knows or is reasonably certain of its truth and/or reality. That is, like *tasdiq*, one has the evidences and pointers that lead to cognizance of a thing. But instead of accepting and submitting to the truth, one decides to fight against it instead. For example: One may actually recognize that a piece of property in his possession actually belongs to another person. But instead of returning the property to its rightful owner he tries to convince others that the property actually belongs to him, and may also fight the rightful claim of the original owner instead of returning his property to him.

Maʿrifah has many degrees.

At its worst, *juhūd* becomes obstinate rebellion (*ʿinād*). One way of describing *ʿinād* is that it is the conscious utilization of one's resources to reject and/or fight something while at the same time having *maʿrifah* of its truth or reality.

Juhūd and especially *ʿinād* are among the worst deeds that someone can engage in. The Qurʾān saves some of its harshest criticisms and warnings for those who engage in *juhūd* and *ʿinād*:

No one stubbornly rejects our signs except the unjust. [29:49]

As for the people of ʿĀd: They behaved arrogantly in the land without truth. They said: "Who is greater than us in strength?" Do they not see that Allāh who created them is greater than them in strength? Yet they were continually stubbornly rejecting our signs.

So We sent against them a fierce vehement wind in the midst of disasters so that they may be made to taste the punishment of humiliation in the immediate life. Yet the punishment of the next life will be even more humiliating and they will not be helped [by anyone]. [41:15-16]

Throw into Jahannam every obstinate rebel;

Preventing goodness, transgressing [all limits], casting doubts. [50:24-25]

Note the connection made in the above selections between *juhūd* and *ʿinād* on the one hand, and arrogance and injustice on the other. Injustice more often than not involves the exercise of power to reject or cover truth, reality, or right. What can be worse than knowing or recognizing truth, reality or right, and then consciously fighting for their opposites: falsehood, illusion, or wrong? It is one thing to act out of simple ignorance – as bad as that is –, but it is quite another level of beastliness to consciously act against that of which one has cognizance of its truth or reality.

We will revisit both *juhūd* and *ʿinād* again in the course of our discussion of *kufr* (covering the truth) (see TSP, Principle 2.7).



The ʿĀd were an ancient Semitic people probably dating back to a time quite before the age of Abraham.

Jahannām is one of the lower – if not the lowest – level of Hell.

Ch 7

From *iqrār* and *taṣdīq* we enter the realm of wayfaring the path of spiritual *walāyah*. In this journey we may reach the higher stations and stages of cognizance and *maʿrifah*. These higher stages of *maʿrifah* involve the operationalization of *tawhīd*, ending finally with the negation of the attributes and *Maʿrifah* in the full sense. It is to this journey that we now turn in the immediate sequel to this book: *Islām, Station, and Process: The Spirituality of Walāyah*.



Appendix A: Synopsis of Principles

1.1	<i>Islām</i> is not ...	21
1.2	<i>Islām</i> is ...	21
1.2.1	<i>Islām</i> has two fundamental senses, full and limited.	26
1.2.2	<i>Islām</i> is not a religion, but a <i>dīn</i> .	28
2.1	Seeking knowledge is virtually a precondition of <i>Islām</i> .	33
2.1.1	<i>Islām</i> criticizes mere speculation and subjective opinion.	34
2.2	<i>Islām</i> is built upon five foundations.	35
2.2.1	<i>Walāyah</i> is the most fundamental foundation of <i>Islām</i> .	37
2.2.2	The axis of an ideal, healthy <i>walāyah</i> -relationship is mutual and symmetrical loving; the manifestation of this axis at the two ends of the axis is polar and complementary.	40
2.2.2	<i>Shahādah</i> is manifestation and application of <i>walāyah</i> .	42
2.3	All <i>walāyah</i> ultimately comes from and is due to Allah.	46

2.4	<i>'Walāyah is absolute and relative.</i>	49
2.5	<i>Islām is the dīn of love.</i>	51
2.6	<i>Safety and security are aspects of walāyah.</i>	52
2.6.1	<i>'Positive walāyah is incomplete without negative walāyah.</i>	53
2.6.2	<i>'Walāyah is manifested through knowledge and justice.</i>	54
2.6.3	<i>'Definition: Islām is the way of walāyah.</i>	58
∞	<i>'Islām is the dīn (or way) of positive walāyah (or dynamic loving) returned in response to the walāyah of Allāh given to creation. 'Walāyah returned to Allāh is the essence of Islām. The core of the activity of walāyah is love; it is manifested through knowledge and the doing of justice.</i>	59
∞	<i>The concept of each activity that makes up Islām can be defined or analyzed in terms of walāyah.</i>	59
2.7	<i>'There are three kinds of Islāmic knowledge.</i>	60
3.1	<i>'The aim of the firm sign is cognizance.</i>	69
∞	<i>The ma'rifah, cognizing, or cognizance of a given thing constitutes a distinct knowledge and awareness of that thing separate from anything else, generally through the medium of some distinguishing sign, mark, or characteristic.</i>	70

3.2	<i>Cognizance is the heart of dīn and walāyah.</i>	71
3.3	<i>'Ubūdiyyah is positive walāyah towards Allāh.</i>	72
3.4	<i>'Ibādah is of two kinds: inward and outward.</i>	73
∞	<i>The activity of 'ibādah (in the outward sense) is the outer shell of 'ubūdiyyah, and 'ubūdiyyah is the inner spirit of 'ibādah.</i>	73
3.5	<i>Rubūbiyyah is walāyah from Allāh.</i>	74
3.6	<i>'Humanity was created for 'ubūdiyyah.</i>	75
3.7	<i>Ma'rifah is the heart of 'ubūdiyyah.</i>	75
3.8	<i>Cognizance of Allāh is cognizance of His signs.</i>	76
3.9	<i>'There are various words for sign.</i>	78
∞	<i>The ma'rifah or cognizance of Allāh is the grasping of Allāh through reflective meditation and contemplation upon the imprints of His walāyah and rubūbiyyah.</i>	80
∞	<i>A sign of Allāh is an imprint of the walāyah and rubūbiyyah of Allāh.</i>	80
3.10	<i>'There are four classes of sign.</i>	81
3.11	<i>Silence is the first step towards cognizance.</i>	86
4.1	<i>'There is an ultimate source of 'Walāyah.</i>	97

4.2	<i>Tawhīd involves the ma'rifah of Allāh's oneness.</i>	103
4.3	<i>There are four kinds of tawhīd.</i>	104
4.3.1	<i>Tawhīd of Essence: There is only one ultimate source of walāyah.</i>	104
4.3.2	<i>Tawhīd of Attributes 1: Only Allāh has the attributes of ultimate walāyah and tanzih.</i>	107
∞	<i>Between Allāh and creation there is no connection, and between Allāh and creation there is no separation.</i>	112
4.3.3	<i>Allāh cannot be seen by the eyes.</i>	114
4.3.4	<i>Tawhīd of Attributes 2: The attributes of the Essence are identical to the Essence.</i>	118
4.3.5	<i>Tawhīd of Actions: Only Allāh can affect the Actions of rubūbiyyah.</i>	121
4.3.6	<i>Allāh is mentioned and addressed through His names.</i>	125
∞	<i>Allāh is propositionally unknowable in His Essence.</i>	127
4.3.7	<i>Tawhīd of 'Ibādah and 'Ubūdiyyah: Only Allāh may be adored, served, and worshipped.</i>	131
∞	<i>The path of the tawhīd of 'ubūdiyyah is the path of placing one's body, soul, spirit, and innermost heart (fu'ād) in harmony with the rubūbiyyah of Allāh.</i>	133

∞	<i>Islām is the dīn of returning ultimate walāyah and 'ubūdiyyah to Allāh and to Allāh alone, in response to the infinite walāyah and rubūbiyyah of Allāh given to creation.</i>	133
4.3.8	<i>The opposite of tawhīd is shirk.</i>	134
∞	<i>Ultimate walāyah, which is 'ubūdiyyah or adoration and service, is to be returned only to Allāh and to no one else at all.</i>	134
5.1	<i>Allāh is the origin of all becoming and motion.</i>	141
5.1.1	<i>The secret of creation lies in the process of the Mashi'ah.</i>	142
5.1.2	<i>The first general outcome of the Mashi'ah is the water of life and walāyah.</i>	148
5.1.3	<i>The Rubūbiyyah of Allāh is projected from the Empyrean of Allāh, His 'Pen, and His Tablet.</i>	152
5.1.4	<i>The hidden world of the Empyrean manifests in the Celestial Dominion.</i>	159
∞	<i>There is no predestination and no free will; rather, it is a matter between the two matters.</i>	163
5.2	<i>Allāh administers creation through creation, both visible and invisible.</i>	166
∞	<i>An angel is a celestial power made of light, possessing consciousness and intelligence, that carries out missions from the Empyrean, including the bearing of messages, signs, and portents.</i>	167

Synopsis of Principles

5.3 *Man is the vicegerent of Allāh on the Earth.* 170

5.4 *Allāh communicates with and guides creation.* 173



5.5 *Humanity must have a reference point of walāyah.* 181

∞ *A prophet is a waliyy of Allāh who is appointed to a very high position and mission that involves being precisely informed of that which Allāh wishes and desires, without the intermediary of any other mortal.* 182

∞ *All walāyah-relationships ultimately reduce to one of two: the ultimate, true walāyah of Allāh or the ultimate, illusory walāyah of Satan.* 189

6.1 *Everything returns to Allāh.* 195

6.1.1 *Every human being tastes death; every soul and its spirit survives.* 198

6.1.2 *The body of the human being will be resurrected with its soul and spirit.* 201

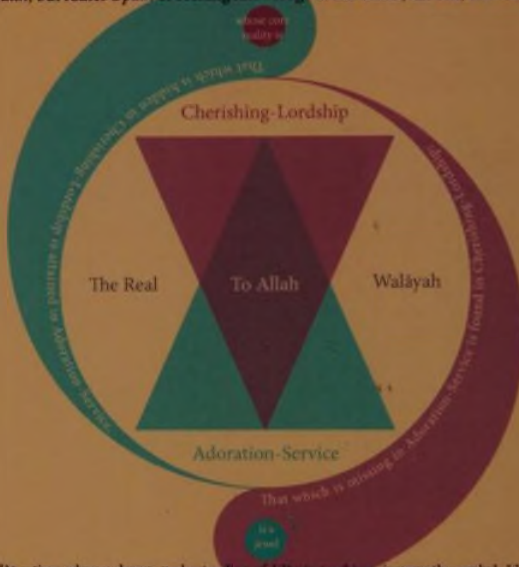
6.1.3 *The human being will be judged; the final destination and abode of the human being is the Garden or the Fire.* 206

7.1 *Ma'rifah has many degrees.* 209

7.1.1 *Iqrār involves acknowledgement and simple recognition.* 210

7.1.2 *Taşdiq involves belief, conviction, and confirmation.* 211

ISLĀM, SIGN AND CREATION is the first and foundational installment in the *Islām-Dynamic Project*. Here, Idris Samawi Hamid constructs a comprehensive and general metaframework from which each genuinely *Islāmic* concept and process can be defined and situated. The lynchpin of this metaframework is the process of *walāyah* or *dynamic loving*. Within the process of *walāyah*, Islām is seen to be, not a static dogma or absolutist faith, but rather a *path* of seeking knowledge of the world, the self, and God.



"At a time when a deeper understanding of *Islāmic* teachings is urgently needed, Idris Samawi Hamid's two installments in the *Islām-Dynamic Project* provide us with a fresh and original approach. Extensively and deeply engaged, the author clarifies at the outset that the *Islāmic* tradition needs to be understood as a *dīn* (a comprehensive way of living, thinking and acting) rather than as a "religion" (in the post-Enlightenment sense of one delineated aspect of life distinct from politics, economics, science and the arts). Hamid also introduces a central motif in *Islāmic* teaching, the concept of *walāyah* (*dynamic loving*), a motif which serves as the basis from which all *Islāmic* concepts and activities are to be derived. *Walāyah* provides the benchmark for determining the degree to which any given phenomenon is actually *Islāmic*. Hamid develops in detail the structure of the original (pre-Sufi, etc.) phenomenon of *Islām*, namely that of the Prophet and the Qur'ān. Also unique to this work is his use of traditions from the Prophet's family, traditions which are usually neglected in Western presentations of *Islām*. These are but a few of the features of this rich and accessible work. Newcomers to *Islām*, Muslims interested in gaining a fresh perspective, college students and scholars are the intended audience."

Dr. James W. Boyd
Emeritus Professor, Department of Philosophy
University Distinguished Teaching/Scholar
Colorado State University